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FROM CENTAUR TO CROSS

Maurice de Guérin

FROM CENTAUR TO CROSS

the unpublished correspondence

&

The Centaur

TRANSLATED BY H. BEDFORD-JONES

INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
LETTERS	58
THE CENTAUR	203

PART ONE

INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION

THIS manuscript was not found in a bottle; it was literally found on the ocean. The discovery of a little packet by a well known American writer looking for stamps amid a mass of old letters; the deciphering of these letters, creased, torn in parts, and hardly legible, in the smoking room of a west-bound liner; the realization that they contained priceless material for the life history of one of the greatest writers of French prose; and finally the resolve of the owner, Mr. Bedford-Jones, to have the letters published and thus add another precious sheaf of documents to the fragments already gathered by the fervent admirers of Maurice de Guérin—such, briefly told, is the story of this publication.

The letters published here for the first time, as far as we have been able to ascertain, could speak for themselves and would hardly need an introduction, even were they just so many more documents added to the material already available on Maurice de Guérin. But separated as they are by wide intervals, and written to different correspondents, they yet

❧ INTRODUCTION ❧

present a curious character of unity. They seem to have been carefully picked out by some one who had access to the papers of Maurice de Guérin, as illustrating some important phases in the development of the great prose poet.

They cover the ten most eventful years of his brief career, from his first attempts to analyze himself to his death, and to the posthumous publication of *Le Centaure*. Not only do they fill extensive gaps in the letters already known, but in many ways they shed a new light on several episodes of Maurice's life hitherto somewhat mysterious. Through them one can plumb the depths of romantic despair into which had sunk the youthful soul of the boy imprisoned behind the walls of College Stanislas—a more intense form of the "*mal du siècle*" than could be found in Chateaubriand, Flaubert or even Baudelaire.

They bring into clearer light his strong friendship for Barbey d'Aurevilly and his brother Léon, a point which seems to have escaped Guérin's biographers; the first manifestation of the terrible disease that was to cut the thread of his life at the age of twenty-nine; his platonic and passionate love for Baronne de Maistre and his very material "*liaison*" with an unnamed lady; his marriage with the charming "Indian" girl, Caroline de Gervain; his short-lived

happiness; the death in the old paternal castle of Le Cayla; finally the emphatic declaration of Eugénie that before dying, Maurice had found again in the old faith of his fathers, the calm and equilibrium he had vainly sought in searching self-analysis, in the enjoyment of the creative artist, in Greek pantheism and even in love.

During the Romantic period it had been so much the fashion for young writers to picture themselves as struck with a fatal illness, that some ridicule has ever since remained attached to the consumptive poets, particularly when it was realized that some of them, like Lamartine and Victor Hugo, lived to a ripe old age. But the illness of Maurice de Guérin was no sacrifice to a literary fad. When he died, he had scarcely had time to write more than a few poems, an unfinished prose-poem *La Bacchante*, and his extraordinary masterpiece, as flawless as the purest Grecian marble, *Le Centaure*. Piously collected and published after his death, these fragments mark a date in French letters. All the pantheism of Leconte de Lisle is already apparent in them; they have the restrained, solemn and vibrant harmony of Renan's *Prière Sur l'Acropole*; they are the *Miserere* of the romantic soul played by an unsurpassed artist on a Greek lyre.

No attempt can be made here to present a complete

biography of Maurice de Guérin, or to repeat what has already been said by M. Abel Lefranc, Zyromski, Seillières and Victor Giraud, to recall only a few of the more recent and important studies on Eugénie and Maurice de Guérin. Maurice de Guérin has his devotees; his importance in the development of French letters and French thought has been repeatedly pointed out during the past twenty years, and his influence has probably never been stronger than to-day. To study him completely would require more than the limited space at our disposal; we shall not even endeavor to utilize fully the documents here published. We shall limit ourselves to the chief biographical facts necessary for the intelligence of the letters, and to a few remarks on their importance.

Georges-Pierre-Maurice de Guérin was born in the family mansion of Le Cayla, near Gaillac, in the department of Tarn, on the fifth of August, 1810, of Pierre-Guillaume-Joseph de Guérin and his wife Jeanne-Victoire-Gertrude Fontenilles. He was the last of four children; Erembert, the oldest, Eugénie, born Jan. 29, 1805, Marie, and finally Maurice. The first eleven years of his life were spent happily in the ancestral home, but his mother, whose health had always been precarious, died of consumption in 1819, and the nine-year-old boy was left to the care of

INTRODUCTION

his older sister Eugénie, who immediately assumed the responsibility of bringing him up.

The village priest taught him Latin, and two years after the death of his mother he was sent to the ecclesiastical college or Petit Séminaire of Toulouse, for his family wanted him to become a priest and could not think of exposing the child to the laic discipline of the lycées established by Napoleon. His ecclesiastic vocation was of short duration, and in 1824 M. de Guérin decided to send him to Paris, although for a family in narrow circumstances this entailed considerable financial sacrifice. In Paris alone he could prepare for the law school and make acquaintances which might later help him in his career. Since Maurice was not attracted by the priesthood, and the army offered no future, the only profession open to him was the law, giving access to the magistracy.

Maurice entered College Stanislas, the best ecclesiastical college in Paris, in the fall of 1824. He was to remain in Paris for five long years, away from his beloved Cayla, even during the summer vacation. Behind the high walls of the college, protecting the young boarding students against the worldly temptations of the Latin Quarter, the boy yearned for the calm and restful horizons of his native province. The

reading of the students was severely supervised and no newspapers were allowed in the College, but who could stop the germs of romanticism floating in the air and penetrating the most forbidding Bastille?

Practically shut off from the world, with very few books at his disposal, Maurice fell into an abstracted mood, dreaming and brooding, a child of few friends except Adrien de Sainte-Marie, whose ambition was to travel and discover new lands, and a tall, broad-shouldered, irascible, violent and complicated descendant of the old Norman pirates, Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly. These two were his bosom friends, the only ones who understood him, with whom he could exchange ideas and dreams; but much as he loved and trusted them, he could not trust himself and he could not trust life.

The time approached when he would receive his degree and go out into the world to prepare for a career. No prospect could be more abhorrent to the timid child whose first years had been shielded by the exclusive and dominating tenderness of an older sister and who knew nothing of society. Feeling the need of a confidant, he wrote a long letter to the headmaster of the College, good Abbé Buquet. More than twenty times he had felt the urge to go to the office of the Prefect of Studies and there bare his soul to

him, but he thought it easier to write than to face a discussion and searching questions.

Pitilessly he dissected every fibre of his heart, exposed that combination of timidity and pride, wild ambition and complete lack of willpower, so often found in sensitive adolescents of the time. He wrote how he was haunted by the thought of death and found a *memento mori* in the most insignificant circumstances; how the fatal term of life was ever present to his mind, but never more so than when his companions were enjoying themselves with the boisterousness of healthy boys; how finally his mind "falling back on itself and unable to find in itself anything except weakness and misery, felt the abominable weariness of everything and sank into utter misery."

He needed more than what encouragement he could receive from a kindly old priest; he was yearning for affection and love, for someone who would protect and comfort him. And he turned to Eugénie for assistance, for the "helpful arm to support him" during the terrible trial he was about to undergo, as he had turned to her when, as a child in the old park of Le Cayla, she had guided his first hesitant steps.

During the spring and early summer of 1829 he plunged deeper and deeper into an abyss of pessimism

and despondency, clutching at the last remnants of a faith already escaping him, but eager to go back to Le Cayla and hoping that, in familiar surroundings and with the help of his sister, he might find himself. He spent the summer with the family, not once daring to express himself freely on the subject. His father did not understand him and did not encourage either his literary or bucolic aspirations. To write poems and to stay at Le Cayla, to look after the paternal estate, to supervise the harvest and vintage, to lead the peaceful life of a country gentleman far from the madding crowd, far from the strife and temptations of the great city, was the cherished but hidden wish of his heart. Returning to Paris, on the contrary, meant exertions of which he felt himself incapable; it meant plunging into the whirl of society in order to make a mark for himself and to secure protectors, to crush competitors, to struggle and certainly to be defeated by men less sensitive, better equipped for the ferocious contest of modern life. But M. de Guérin had determined that the young man should at least try, that he must go back to Paris. If Maurice protested at all, he had not the courage to raise his voice; he did not even find an opportunity to tell Eugénie all he desired to tell her—an irritable, nervous, timid, oversensitive child of genius.

❧ INTRODUCTION ❧

Only when back in Paris did he dare write his sister, begging for her intercession with M. de Guérin. This is the first letter in Mr. Bedford-Jones' collection and is dated Dec. 5, 1829. He had waited almost two months, but finally had decided to "raise the corner of the veil concealing and protecting his inner life." One can scarcely imagine a more pathetic document, and one understands how, after reading it, Eugénie could write above the first line: "*pauvre enfant!*"

That he was a Romantic in the current sense of the word he strenuously denied. To be a Romantic was to follow a certain mode, to adopt a certain attitude, and he could not discover in himself any leaning towards the Young France group with their red waistcoats and Nile-green trousers who were acclaiming Victor Hugo, dubbing Racine a *polisson*, and making merry in the taverns of Paris. His aristocratic and timid soul recoiled as much before the turmoil of literary coteries and quarrels, as before the more polite but fiercer struggle for success of the salons. Had he heard the call and felt the urge of religion, he might have become a monk or priest. Had he discerned in himself the faintest spark of energy he would have nursed it jealously in the hope of overcoming his deficiencies. But how could he overcome himself? "Can weakness and discouragement overcome weak-

ness and discouragement?" "God!" he cried in his anguish. "How to bring to life what is dead? Someone must always shove me forward, someone must ever hold me in leading-strings; I linger in eternal infancy."

Convinced that he could be nothing but a failure if he stayed in Paris, Maurice insisted that the only sensible decision would be to return to Le Cayla to settle down and become "the business agent" of his father. The desperate appeal of the young provincial remained unheeded. Maurice entered the law school, and as the allowance granted by M. de Guérin was very meagre, he began tutoring in order to eke out an insufficient income. Whether he complained again is not known, and in the letters hitherto published nothing indicates that Maurice tarried in Paris against his own wishes. But some of the evidence may have been suppressed, and it is permitted to suspect that when the letters were communicated to Trébutien some, at least, were reserved. The fact remains that Maurice was forced to stay in Paris when he yearned for the pure and clear air of Le Cayla—which might have prevented the fatal germs of the disease from developing.

He attended lectures at the law school, witnessed the scenes of the Revolution of 1830 as a disinterested

INTRODUCTION

observer, and eagerly plunged into all the books heretofore unobtainable—Victor Hugo, Byron and Goethe, whose *Memoirs* were his *Vade Mecum* and whose *Faust* fascinated him as a book “written by an angel under the dictation of a demon.” For the next three years Maurice de Guérin drifted, spending as much of the summer vacations as he could at Le Cayla, each year postponing the resumption of his tedious tasks in Paris, until in the summer of 1832 he decided to go to Brittany and settle at La Chênaie, near the great liberal Catholic Lamennais, who had gathered about himself a small group of selected friends and disciples.

Here Maurice studied more earnestly than ever before. He took up Italian, English and German, and resumed the study of Greek; he spent long evenings listening to the discussions of M. Féli, as Lamennais was familiarly called, with his disciples. But it does not seem that Lamennais himself discovered or even suspected the wealth of poetry and emotion jealously treasured by the young man; even at La Chênaie, Maurice withdrew within himself and resolved to live more and more in a microcosm of his own, “a narrow circle of realities, like an ant in a small hole dug out in the sand.” When in September, 1833, the doors of La Chênaie were closed by order of the Bishop

INTRODUCTION

of Rennes, and the small colony scattered, Maurice took with him the memory of the "silver sweet sounding" voice of the great orator, but little of his doctrine.

He hated Paris as much as ever, yet he had to return to the great city, for there alone he could make a living, but he delayed facing life as much as possible. First he thought of entering the College de Juilly, visited H. de la Morvonnais, the Breton poet whom he had met at La Chênaie, and stayed several weeks at Caen with his old college friend Jules Barbey and his brother Léon, who already intended to enter the priesthood.

Reaching Paris at last, he had decided to write, and tried his hand at some articles which appeared in the *Revue Européenne* and *La France Catholique*, "a small publication, not one of the best nor one of the richest"; for them he received six francs a column, about sixty francs a month. Stanislas became his refuge during the summer, and his old teachers found some lessons for him and even entrusted him, later, with a class at the college; but he had to resume his tutoring, running from one end of Paris to the other, from 7:30 in the morning until 9:30 at night. He slept in the house of a cousin, dined for 24 cents, read enormously, dreamed constantly and long into the night, sat at his table filling page after page of his

diary with his brooding, and with the pitiless and searching analysis of his mind. Perhaps a strong effort would have pulled him out of this rut in which there was "no hope, no future, no joy"; at that time he thought of preparing for the "*agrégation*," which would have given him a position in the University, but the "indifferent child of the earth" was not the type that succeeds in competitive examinations, and soon he gave up the project.

For this period of his life, three precious letters complete what we knew but imperfectly from his letters to Hippolyte de la Morvonnais and his sister. Frank as he was in his confidences to Eugénie, he could never bare his soul to her as he did to a friend. At Caen, he had met Léon Barbey d'Aurevilly, and the serious young man had attracted him and comforted him. In a fit of complete depression which left him exhausted, without strength to think or even to dream, Maurice wrote him at the beginning of December one of his most desperate letters.

"Today this sorry imagination, by which I habitually live, whence springs all my cycle of obscure delights and those occult raptures never emerging outside myself—this sorry imagination has run dry. When I say 'today,' I do not say enough; it is now eight days since my inner existence began to lessen, since the flood began

to ebb, subsiding in such a marked degree that after some courses of the sun there remained only a tiny thread of water. Today I have seen the last drop drained."

It was a most terrible experience for one who lived so much in himself, and from his own substance:

"The vague and subtle whispers, the undulant chorus of distant voices, the echoes of nature's inward music—all this lovely stream of murmurs has ceased. Like a man walking in the night with a torch, as I went forward everything seemed clad in a splendor at once vivid and sweet; and in this light, as in a fluid, the sharpened yet softened picture seemed to take on new delights and to enjoy I know not what voluptuous pleasure which enlivened its traits and gave it unguessed beauties. Today, I cast only shadows around me, every form is opaque and death-smitten; as in a nocturnal walk, I bear forward the lonely realization of my own existence among the inert phantoms of all things around."

But Léon Barbey was in Caen, letters were unsatisfactory, and the young candidate for the priesthood could not communicate very frequently with Maurice. Fortunately, his brother Jules Barbey d'Aureville left Caen at that time and brought his young friend the comfort of his friendship. Those who are acquainted with Barbey d'Aureville at that time, through his

recently published *Memorandum* would little imagine that the young esthete who spent hours with his tailor designing cut steel buttons for a waistcoat, drinking tea à l'eau de Cologne, parading, an enormous rose in his lapel, on the Boulevard, was the man to give aid and comfort to such a bruised and sensitive soul as that of Maurice de Guérin.

And yet between the two existed a friendship deeper and stronger than the love of two brethren—the love of the weak for the strong, of the timid for the cynic. Maurice admired Barbey for having strength to ignore the misery and pettiness of life: “for I bleed terribly,” he wrote, “on thorns which would scarcely prick at the passing folds of your toga.” From him he implored moral courage, with him he found that life still proffered smiles, without him he lost courage and felt “depressed, shattered, a grievous ruin.” If at times he had ambitions for literary fame, if he had indulged in dreams of glory, Maurice felt in this winter of 1835 that he had reached the bottom of the abyss:

“You can never know—you—what passes in this tomb of dejection where my soul is shrouded; there it is eaten away, but in a worse manner than a body in a grave, I assure you. Thus will be all my life. Have you seen fruit, fallen from a tree, gnawed away by myriads of ants and carried off

morsel by morsel to their home? I am such a fallen fruit. Against suffering, I am helpless as an infant. Only when with you do I feel any reprieve from life and men. If you but knew how miserable is my life!"

The next letter in our collection (July 15, 1835) contains an allusion to a love adventure of Maurice de Guérin which had hitherto escaped his biographers. It cannot possibly be the great passion which interfered with his marriage three years later, and lifted him above himself. It was more probably a banal liaison of no long duration, a *caprice* of which Guérin tired rapidly, with an intelligent and kindly woman, who cannot have been very deeply in love with the poet herself.

The only known episode of Guérin's life to which this letter may refer is the adventure "romanced" by Barbey d'Aurevilly in his prose poem *Amaidée*, in which Guérin appears as *Somegod*. If this conjecture be correct, the true story was very different from the lyrical version given by Barbey:

"Since your departure," wrote Maurice, "I have had but one joy—that of breaking, thanks to a slight effort, the last ties of dependence which so troubled me. I did not write; I spoke—without finesse, however, and with all my ill-advised and limping speech which pursues its

❧ INTRODUCTION ❧

aim so awkwardly. But I addressed a woman so kind and of such fine perception that she discerned the object of my speech from the very first words, and forestalled the slow and timid approach of my representations. She herself, and with excellent good grace, set me at liberty."

The next letter to Barbey, the most self-revealing of all, is rather unexpected. It seems that Guérin could not torture himself more and endure more suffering, yet it was written that not a single sentiment should escape his pitiless and morbid analysis. This time his fraternal love for Eugénie was under dissection.

He had for some time maintained an almost daily correspondence with his sister, since she was writing for him a journal of which she sent pages regularly, and at first Maurice responded in kind. He knew however that whatever communication he addressed to Le Cayla was apt to be read by other members of the family. He could not possibly let his father guess at the depths of pessimism into which he had sunk, and he could not even let Eugénie suspect it. Thus, step by step, brother and sister became almost estranged, until Eugénie wrote long complaining letters in which she hinted that Maurice was either absorbed in some political plot or deeply in love, a guilty love which he could not mention. To Eugénie, Maurice replied in a letter published by M. Abel Le-

franc: politics was a matter of complete indifference to him; he did not associate any more with the friends of Lamennais, for he had recovered an independence only temporarily abdicated; he was even less caught in the meshes of passion, for he knew he "was almost incapable of ever experiencing even a mediocre development of any passion."

But in a letter to Barbey, written a month and a half later, and in Mr. Bedford-Jones' collection, he confesses himself more completely than ever before. Eugénie was complaining almost like a jealous mistress, writing: "Why do you cast aside my prayers, my complaints, my love? You are through with me, that is all." What could he answer to such impassioned appeals and entreaties, when he felt only like a weak, tired child, unable to respond to these exalted expressions? Then comes out what Guérin sincerely believed to be a monstrous trait in his nature, the frightful secret he had concealed from all, the moral deformity with which he thought himself afflicted, the last romantic perversion:

"I remember most distinctly how, at an early age, I found a sweet pleasure in beating the animals I loved; their cries brought me a rending of the heart, a nameless voluptuousness of pity which I craved. Were I a Roman emperor, I would perhaps set my friends on the rack for the

pleasure of pitying them. I would tell myself: 'They love me, they believed I loved them; with what astonishment, more grievous than the torture itself, must my motiveless rage strike them!' These reflections would affect me deeply and I would derive from them a heartrending pain on which I would gorge. There is the clearest analysis I can give you of this horrible eccentricity. Did I address this to my sister, she would find in it the explanation for many mysterious things in the course of my affection for her. She would learn that I make her suffer because I love her greatly. You will believe me insane—believe what you like. I tell you the truth, you who know human nature; can you hesitate to believe it? I confess to you as man to man, weak nature to strong nature, troubled and vacillating spirit to serene and lofty intelligence."

From all we know of Maurice de Guérin it is difficult to believe that the sadistic tendency here so clearly and so mercilessly analyzed was deeply ingrained in him, or even really existed at all. Much more plausible is the explanation that his morbid mind was inventing imaginary crimes, that he took a painful pleasure in remembering some of the wanton and ignorant cruelties common to so many children, and self-analysis when carried to that extreme is apt at creating phantoms. But the document is nevertheless revealing, as

regards the state of his mind at this date. To sink deeper was impossible; suicide or insanity seemed the only issue.

Yet, at this very moment, Maurice found in himself unknown resources and undertook the slow and painful process of re-educating his will. A week later he wrote his father a letter published by M. Abel Lefranc without any commentary, but which, studied in the light of the quotation just given, seems to me the most terrible condemnation of Eugénie:

“Long tutelage prolongs moral minority,” Maurice wrote his father. “Fruits do not ripen in the shade. At a certain time of life conviction of one’s inner weakness can be fatal. It gives birth and growth to a sort of humility which stifles all the germs of strength and courage and makes one’s life isolated from everything, cowardly and woeful. Yet one hardens the body as soon as possible; at least those who understand anything in the true interest of children and love them intelligently do not fail to do it. Why is it not done in the same way, with proper precautions, with moral education? Weak and timid characters are most deplorable, and cause most cruel sufferings, particularly if thinking is developed and procures a vivid consciousness of the self. It is a terrible disease which requires a long and severe treatment. The training of the will is the surest cure, and will can be trained only

when a man has become independent and counts only on himself to arrange his own life."

Not a word of regret, not a word of accusation; yet who could help feeling that Maurice himself perceived that the ascendancy taken over him so early in life by his older sister, was at the same time his good fortune and his sad misfortune? She loved him intensely with the motherly affection of which the boy had been deprived so early in life, but not with the self-sacrificing love of a mother. She loved him jealously, she unconsciously tried to shape his moral life for him, she developed in him a sensibility already too keen, she lived for him and in him—but she probably killed in him that sense of self-reliance, moral independence and will-power he so greatly admired in his friend Barbey.

"I think she is disappointed in my development," wrote Maurice to Barbey d'Aurevilly, in the letter already quoted. "She expected I would be different, and would like to fashion me over into what she imagined I should become. I am asked for conformities beyond my abilities, for outpourings which I shall grant out of consideration, but never spontaneously, and for expression of a tenderness which dwells in my brain and doubtless also in my heart, but there latently, without power to quicken its pulsations." To some

devotees of Eugénie de Guérin the publication of this letter will perhaps seem sacrilegious and we may understand why it did not appear in the collection made by Trébutien. And yet we may ponder whether it does not contain the tragedy and the secret of Maurice's life. At any rate it seems impossible to ignore it in any complete biography of the unhappy poet.

Unfortunately the *Journal* of Maurice de Guérin stops in the middle of the same year, 1835, and his published correspondence offers but meagre information on the discipline which enabled him to recuperate and face life anew. He probably found some consolation in developing the pagan love of nature which found complete expression in *Le Centaure*. But first of all he adopted a pose. The timid student, dressed like a dandy, emulated Barbey d'Aurevilly himself, to the point that "he could have given lessons in dress and manners to Lord Byron."

At about the same time another friend of Maurice's, B. de Marzan, deplored that "his face, magnificently shaded with admirable black hair, was marked with the fatal stamp of a Byronic sneer." To wear a Byronic air was the fashion of the day, but the Moorish traits of Maurice, his dark complexion, all added a sort of exotic charm to the young southerner. He frequented

Barbey and his friends, tutoring, writing articles, doing hack work for magazines, from early morning until evening, and spent the larger part of the night in *petits soupers*, dancing to the point of exhaustion and ending in long talks with Barbey.

The summer of 1835, however, marks a new date in Guérin's life, and to the influence that entered his existence may be attributed, to a large extent, the new hold he took on life when life was already beginning to ebb in him. In September of that year he undertook a long journey with his friend Adrien de Sainte-Marie. Sometimes on foot, sometimes on horseback, by stagecoach or steamboat, they visited the valley of the Loire, went back to Bourges and Nevers, and stopped at the Château des Coques where Maurice met Adrien's sister, Baronne de Maistre—"prepared for passion," wrote Barbey later, "by ten years of life in the country with an idiotic husband."

But two years were to elapse between Maurice's first visit to the Château des Coques and the passionate outburst of the summer of 1837. For this period of his life, the *Memorandum* of Barbey d'Aurevilly is the most valuable source. We can follow Guérin almost day by day, reading to Barbey passages from Eugénie's journal, visiting museums, reading and discussing, emerging from pessimism to plunge into

pantheism, talking about trifles but "with kin spirits trifles are no longer trifles," and finally moving from his separate quarters in order to live at the same hotel "so that the same cloak could now cover both of them."

He had not forgotten the dark eyes and the Juno-like beauty of the lady of Les Coques. As she spent the winter in Paris, he called on her frequently, but he was soon enmeshed, a not unwilling victim, in the net of a friendly conspiracy. In the fall of 1836, Guérin had begun tutoring in Latin a young boy, nephew of Mlle. Martin-Laforest and brother of Mlle. Caroline de Gervain, the young "Indian" he was to marry two years later. Born in Batavia, as the biographers of Maurice say—although we know that she had to obtain the papers necessary to the civil marriage from Calcutta—Mlle. de Gervain had a naiveté and exotic charm which could not fail to attract the young poet. Mlle. Martin-Laforest gave him some of the motherly affection he had missed in his early youth, and in return he brought the ladies the newest books. There were discussions, and advice about reading; he called more often and stayed longer, enjoying the calm and restful quiet he found near the winning Caroline. Nothing was said about marriage, but it was clear that Maurice had only to speak to obtain

Mlle. de Gervain's hand. With her he would have a home, untroubled domestic happiness, and also comfort, since she had a fat dowry.

A letter in our collection, unfortunately much torn and mutilated, contains some interesting indications on Maurice's state of mind at the end of the year 1836. It seems that Barbey d'Aurevilly had written him to encourage his timid matrimonial *velleities*. Guérin answered with a playfully written dissertation on love and marriage in which he appeared very reluctant to launch on such a hazardous venture. Marriage and self-respect seemed hardly compatible; he felt completely unable to play the part of a devoted husband, to mix love and mercenary considerations, and for the time-being was more attracted by the new dance-hall just erected by Musard than by the peaceful bliss of a domestic hearth. (Ms. Dec. 9, 1836.)

In April, 1837, Barbey had this to say about his friend: "Talked to G. and gave him the best possible advice of which the indolent and distrustful character won't make any use. Madame de . . . insists upon having a *cicisbeo*. I should become her *cicisbeo* for one winter, after which I would break away if I were bored. G. wishes to go in society next winter; would it not be very pleasant to find there his beauty, his queen? But why has he fallen in love elsewhere? A

funny sort of a love, a shivering and sometimes feverish child. Shall we be able to make it grow and to make it the powerful god who subjects everything? *It is difficult.*"

The result of the conversation for that night was that G. drank immoderately, and as he drank, became more and more emotional, while maintaining in a halting voice that he had never been so cold and so calculating—although quite unable to count his change when he paid the bill. A much stronger temperament would have broken down under the combined strain of hard work, late hours, dissipation and continuous emotional stress. No worse régime could have been devised for a man of the type of Maurice, while Barbey himself, despite his strong Norman constitution, was constantly ailing.

Early in the spring of 1837, Guérin's health took a decided turn for the worse. On May 25th Eugénie wrote a friend, Mlle. Irène Compayre: "Bad news has come from Paris. My brother is ill, seriously enough for the doctor to send him to breathe the air of his native place. It seems that the cold of Paris, grippe and excess of work have ruined his health. Poor child!" A pathetic word dictated by Maurice from his sickbed for Baronne de Maistre, on whom he was to call the

same evening, contains a brief account of the first unmistakable manifestation of the disease.

Wednesday 26.

“Madame:

A rather heavy vomiting of blood keeps me from having the honor of seeing you today. The worst of my illness is my regret. I have just been bled, and this also prevents me from writing you myself and expressing my disappointment at thinking how different my evening must be. I shall think of you all the same, but should prefer to do so when at your side.”

As soon as he had sufficiently recovered he decided to leave Paris for Le Cayla, but not directly. He wanted to stop on his way, go to Nevers and there visit his beloved at the Château des Coques. According to M. Abel Lefranc it was at this time that Maurice wrote the series of extraordinary love letters, only recently published, and this conjecture is supported by Barbey d'Aurevilly.

Maurice had left Paris on June 11th, after exacting from Barbey a promise to keep a complete diary and send him a faithful account of all his actions. On the 18th, Barbey received a first letter from Maurice “who grows weary at the feet of his neglected beloved, and *ecco la vita*.” But two days later another letter came. Guérin had been “trussed up; the ice was

broken, the intrigue begun. The poor fellow does not know a word about his own heart for when I thought he was caught, he wrote *I love her* (which one, this one, the other one?) *and I shall love her, I believe, madly!* Madly, yea, like a dove! Faith, I would almost feel like 'huffing' his Indian girl, and one must confess that he deserves it!"

Two days later Barbey presented himself at the house in Rue du Cherche-Midi to pay his first visit to the "celestial Indian, the pretty girl from the Ganges." As Mlle. Martin-Laforest was out, Caroline could not receive an unknown caller and Barbey had to content himself with a glimpse of a swaying waist and a white dress in the mysterious shadows of the parlor. In August he finally succeeded in being introduced and he entered in his *Memorandum*:

"Saw the fiancée, or rather infiancée, of G. Pretty sweet, white, tall, slim, a slender waist and slender hands—two beauties in my eyes—thick blond curls in the English fashion on each side of her face, like two inverted bouquets. Speaks some, not timid, with an accent of which no European accent can give any idea. More singular than pleasant but not unpleasant nevertheless."

Meantime, in the château of the Nivernais, Guérin was entirely giving himself up to his romantic passion.

Years afterwards, on receiving the first *Reliquiae* of Maurice, Madame de Maistre wrote Trébutien:

“What pleasure I felt on seeing again this charming spirit, so full of melancholy sweetness, of dreamy poetry and native elegance! I lived again my twenty-fifth year. We were two young beings about to die, raising our eyes to heaven, affrighted and curious, fascinated by the idea of the infinite, which constituted the substance of our conversation, but more dazzled than really enlightened by the true light of Catholicism.”

Nine years after the death of Guérin, Barbey painted in bold strokes a magnificent and brutal portrait of the Baronne, then almost a complete invalid. Victor Giraud, in his recent book on Eugénie de Guérin, has surmised that the Baronne was probably less *maladive* in 1837; but in the letters written the same year by Maurice to Madame de Maistre, we find many references to her poor health, and there is every indication that, like the Elvire of Lamartine, the lady of Maurice's dreams thought that her days were numbered.

Judging from the bold, feverish letters written by Maurice after he had retired to his room in the silence of the late hours, one might surmise that the Baronne was carried away by that stormy love; but Maurice was less bold during the day. She gave him a few

flowers, she told him the story of her life; how she had been married against her wishes, how she had hoped to die, and how her whole life had been an abominable coercion. But repeatedly she begged him not to sacrifice his career, his future, his whole existence, to a love that could not be requited. Maurice on his part had chiefly found in her that tender and protecting love he had been longing for since the first days of his adolescence: "Here," he wrote one night, "my life is under the sweet care of your tenderness; you are my guardian and I cannot escape your watchfulness; everywhere it follows me, it lights the way for me, it protects me . . . What shall become of me after I leave the magic circle of kindness you make around me? In what awful void shall I perish? Sad anxieties! What use is it to plumb the abyss into which one is to be hurled?"

On a Saturday night he took formal leave of the family, M. de Maistre, Mme. de Sainte-Marie, the little girl playing near her mother, and he looked so depressed that even the child noticed his sadness. He was taking with him the memory of the rose given in the garden, of the evening when she had wept with him; and to her he was leaving a solemn and mysterious promise, whose nature we shall presently discover. His family anxiously awaited him at Le

INTRODUCTION

Cayla, but he was too full of emotion not to betray his secret, if he went direct to the old house. He wanted to be alone, all by himself, to live over in his memory the wonderful days of his "*roman d'amour*." So he started on a journey down the Rhone, passed by Vienne and Nîmes, reached the Mediterranean and slowly wended his way back to Cayla, where he arrived July 25th.

After an absence of five years, they were all reunited. His father and his sisters had not changed appreciably, Maurice found; as for himself, although thin and emaciated, he had been tanned by the rays of the southern sun and had at least some appearance of good health. From this time on, he could write only official letters to Mme. de Maistre, letters to be read by Mme. de Sainte-Marie and by M. de Maistre himself. However, before parting they had agreed upon a sort of code, so that apparently indifferent phrases would contain a world of meaning if only one read between the lines; and for one who reads between the lines, with even ordinary sagacity, the letters here published contain many significant passages.

From his little room at Le Cayla, isolated and tranquil as he could wish, with the cicadas shrilling in the nearby trees, he wrote her a long account of his journey down the Rhone. In a significant phrase, he

promised that he would religiously "fulfill his promise to obey the counsels given with such kindness." But into the last sentence he put all the tenderness he could not openly express: "Will Mlle. Valentine allow me to add a kiss to my remembrance?" And we need no assurance that Mme. de Maistre understood. The nature of the mysterious promise appears in a letter to Mlle. Martin-Laforest, for to Caroline herself he could not write directly; it simply was not done in the Thirties. Not only did he resume his correspondence with her, but it was understood that Mlle. Martin-Laforest and her niece would soon come to Le Cayla for a visit. This could mean only one thing—that Caroline would officially become Maurice's fiancée, for in no other quality could a well-brought-up young girl accept the hospitality of Maurice's family, even under proper chaperonage.

Once more Maurice had a relapse; he was so weak and tired that his sisters and father insisted that he should not go to church on Sunday. He wrote Mme. de Maistre a long letter in his solitary room, in the silence of an autumnal Sunday morning in the country, unbroken save by the light scratching of his pen on the paper. (Ms. August 6, 1837.) It is a playful and almost boyish letter in appearance, in eulogy of poor Blanche, the cow who had so abundantly

given him of her milk when he was at Les Coques, with dithyrambic praise of the virtuous beverage, for "can anyone mention a man who has committed a bloody crime after drinking a cup of milk?" But for all the fun, all the affected buoyancy of spirits, he had to admit that he was so weak that he must limit himself to very slow rides on horseback; the tertian fever had added a new complication to his old ailment. As usual he ended in a very formal way, but after his name wrote three mysterious signs which according to the code were to convey a secret message.

A week later the fever had abated and he could resume the regular treatment for his "chest"; leeches, mustard plasters, everything prescribed and advised was brought into play in a desperate effort to bring him back to health. (Ms. August 13, 1837.) He felt a secret energy arise within himself; he was renewed in courage, was ready to cope with all difficulties, and rejoiced in the resurrection of his moral faculties. Had he but known it, he was experiencing one of those short waves of ebbing strength so common in consumptives, and so often mistaken by them and by their families for an encouraging symptom; but for a few days at least, Maurice was confident that he was on the way to recovery, and indulged in plans for the future. Then came a sentence in cryptic but signifi-

cant language indicating that he had not forgotten his promise: "I begin to feel a change in my taste for travel. I do not believe happiness is errant; I think it rather a domestic body, which chooses its dwelling and never leaves." Could he more clearly indicate that he had made up his mind to accept the prospect of marrying the young "Indian"?

Could any doubt remain as to the true nature of his relations with Mme. de Maistre, it would vanish after reading an entry in Barbey's *Memorandum* under the same date "G. . . . I must write him. I received news from him recently. With . . . he has not got beyond the preliminaries. They exchange letters; for G., who has never yet described himself to any woman, it is an excellent opportunity to enjoy a pleasure very vivid to a young man. Yes, indeed very vivid, the most vivid of all. But for a seduction, it is not of the highest order; one must never reveal oneself entirely to a woman. That would soon kill her interest."

The matrimonial plans of Maurice soon matured, however. Mlle. Martin-Laforest spent several weeks during September and October at Le Cayla. The family was much pleased both with the aunt and the niece. Guérin's fiancée had quite a substantial fortune, a circumstance never to be neglected by a good provincial family and in this case quite important,

INTRODUCTION

since after his marriage Maurice could abandon his hack work, the exhausting and tedious tutoring of lazy children, and could be surrounded with comfort and all possible care.

The young man felt decidedly better, and was enjoying to the full autumn days of perfect sweetness. He was still very weak and the doctor had forbidden him any exertion, but this did not apply to writing Mme. de Maistre and thinking of her as she surveyed from the verandah of her summer cottage the grape-picking scenes on the hillsides. (Ms. October 7, 1837.) Then came a sudden and terrible crisis. Strong fever, followed by absolute coma, held Maurice for several days without consciousness of a single thought passing through his head. He lived "only in the body," a weak and vacillating life. The doctor told the family that little hope was left. Eugénie, in a letter to Mme. de Maistre, told her how Maurice was miraculously saved when even the doctor had given him up. But nowhere is the account of this miraculous cure so complete as in the letter written by Maurice himself to the lady of Les Coques after the crisis was over:

"Meanwhile they had recourse to more potent means. My sisters, who stand well with heaven, implored it to cure me. They began a novena, and the day after it ended I wakened, so obviously

relieved that I said to the first person who opened my curtains: "Truly I believe I am cured!" This was the morning after the doctor had given me up." (Ms. October 26, 1837.)

It was a complete cure, or so he thought, and he was soon able to get up and enjoy the last beautiful days of autumn. He even went to Gaillac and to Cordes, and on Nov. 8th Barbey entered in his *Memorandum*: "Written to Guérin who is better; he will get married and come back. Three items of good news. My dream was not deceiving; a good answer to those people who boast of not being superstitious. It seems that it will be in the month of roses, in May, that our poet will become a husband. The story of this marriage is a right turn about. Guérin naturally seems very happy, and I am happy too, because I believe he needs a home of his own. He will have time to work, not in order to make a living, but to think or to give forth harmonies. . . . All considered, who does not need a home? Byron spoke so badly of it only because his own had been ruined."

Maurice made preparation to return to Paris. He had neglected Mme. de Maistre so much during his illness and Caroline's visit, that the Baronne had her mother write Eugénie, not daring to write herself. But although December had come there were still some

beautiful days "for the air is as velvety as in the finest days of September. The sun, although failing and in shortened course, gives enough warmth to perfect a convalescence. I profit by these gentle aids to complete mine, and might say I have done so were it not for a lingering irritation of the chest." But he had more important news to give Mme. de Maistre; the almost official announcement that he had fulfilled his promise:

"In my last letter I explained the reasons which so press me to depart for Paris; they are reasons which suffer no denial, reasons of finance and position. It is necessary, as they say, to honor one's business; but this is impossible here. Mlle. Martin-Laforest and her niece stopped here some little time. The question of the future was settled as far as was possible, but in the present uncertainty it was agreed not to mention it to anyone." (Ms. Dec. 18, 1837.)

January found him still at Le Cayla, instinctively dreading the cold dampness of Paris, experiencing a sort of rejuvenation of his whole being, and hoping for "a better future, for a new destiny in the bosom of an adopted family." (Ms. Jan. 7, 1838.) He finally left for Paris on January 25th.

The marriage had been postponed pending the arrival of some documents from Calcutta, but Guérin

❧ INTRODUCTION ❧

was still of too delicate health and needed too much care to be permitted to re-enter his bachelor's quarters. He was received in the house of his fiancée by Mlle. Martin-Laforest, and there he spent the spring and summer, coddled by the two women, hardly permitted to go out, visited from time to time by Barbey d'Aurevilly, who on Caroline's birthday made bold to kiss her on both cheeks, and the old aunt into the bargain.

The summer was spent between relapses and ameliorations. Nursed, fondled, protected by Caroline and her aunt, Maurice did not cut a dashing figure as a fiancé. The old melancholy and despondency were recurring, and naturally had to be concealed from the two women. Barbey d'Aurevilly alone was taken into the confidence of the poet. On August 3rd he wrote in his *Memorandum*: "Received a note from G. . . . admirable for the knowledge of his own self, in its simplicity and ennui. It would be impossible to describe weariness in a more charming manner, with more lively imagination." But if Barbey enjoyed as an artist the penetrating and cruel analysis made by Guérin of his own heart, he did not see without some anxiety the recurrence of the old romantic disease: "A superb letter from Guérin, who insults his mind with his mind and in the name of his mind. He should be careful." (August 19, 1838.) The poet had all the

physical comfort, all the tenderness and affection he could wish, around him, but in the house in Rue du Cherche-Midi an intense depression fell upon him. "Why is it," asks Barbey at the end of September, "that Guérin is always without animation or liveliness when at home, and in high spirits when he is in my room? A strange character."

The papers finally arrived from Calcutta and the date of the marriage was decided upon. Eugénie was to represent the family, for M. du Cayla was in very feeble health and not equal to the long journey. The provincial girl was to have her first contact with Paris and the brilliant society in which her brother had lived for almost fourteen years.

Maurice was there on the Place des Victoires with his new family, Caro and Mlle. Martin-Laforest, when the coach drove in. He ran across the square, almost crying with emotion, emaciated and weak, and Eugénie felt a presentiment that there would be more sadness than rejoicing at the wedding. Caroline herself was pale, slim, without strength, the boy had a bad cold, the old aunt complained of rheumatism, "all the household was united in a solidarity of suffering."

The next day Barbey called on Maurice and after he was back in his own room took his pen as he was wont and drew an inimitable portrait of Eugénie:

"Her features are not pretty. One might almost think her ugly, if it were possible to be ugly with such a face—a face killed by the soul and eyes wearied by inner struggles. . . . Her voice has not the slightest accent and contrasts in its freshness with the appearance of fatigue, almost exhaustion, of her person. One is pleasantly astonished to hear this sweet soft voice from this thin and ascetic throat, such as imagination lends to Maria of Egypt and the Holy Women of the desert in the legends. And yet withal she has no sanctimonious and saintlike air, not even an air of touching piety such as a *bourgeoise* with such a soul would not fail to evince. In her the *patri-cian* overshadows the *Christian*."

On her part, Eugénie was at the same time attracted and puzzled by the strange and powerful personality of Barbey: "A beautiful palace in which there is a labyrinth," she told Maurice after Barbey had left, and Maurice, proud of his sister, did not forget to repeat it to his friend next day.

November came, and the date of the wedding was irrevocably set for the fifteenth. On the ninth, Maurice wrote Mme. de Maistre an official letter intended for the family, but for one reading between the lines it is clear that he had not forgotten the parting scene at the Château des Coques:

"My wedding is now definitely fixed for the fifteenth of this month. I have too many tokens

of your friendship and that of M. de Maistre, not to be certain that you will think of me a little on that day, and that you will not let me enter the church of Abbaye-aux-Bois without your best wishes accompanying me."

Not the letter of a fiancé enraptured by the charms of his beloved; rather that of an obedient lover sacrificing himself at the feet of the only one he really loved, without hope. But could a poet ever be without hope? Could he abolish the past by one strong act of his will, could he think only of the future? In the future he pictured for himself, Mme. de Maistre occupied a very important part.

He was already looking forward to her return to Paris, when she would again occupy her hotel in Faubourg Saint-Germain, not so far from Rue du Cherche-Midi. The last paragraph, involved and mysterious as it may have appeared to M. de Maistre, must have been quite clear to his wife:

"For prosaic and positive though I have become, I can still indulge in dreams. I am not yet sufficiently of the earth, earthy, not to make plans in which the charms of the higher life will have some share."

Poor Caro, devoted and affectionate as she was, could not give the poet that spiritual exaltation he felt when he was near Mme. de Maistre.

Barbey was at the wedding; he signed, as a witness, the bourgeois "*contrat de mariage*," on the 14th, and next day dutifully attended all the religious and social functions. He even danced with Eugénie and came home somewhat depressed, for he felt that Guérin would never again associate with him as before, when both were living under the same roof and, so to speak, "under the same cloak." It was Maurice de Guérin's great misfortune to be loved too tenderly, too exclusively, by his friends and by his sister.

This passing jealousy, barely indicated by Barbey, was more acutely felt by Eugénie. Not that she openly manifested any such sentiment. Maurice had more than once admired her self-control and perfect composure, her ability to smooth over domestic difficulties by ignoring them. She did not express herself freely on the matter in her *Journal*, but in a letter to Louise de Bayne she involuntarily let a few revealing words escape her:

"Maurice will be very happy with her, I hope. But I know of no other woman with such a character, such a heart, such an appearance. She is a *stranger*. I study her, so as to be able to penetrate her, to commune with her if she cannot commune with me. With so much kindness and generosity on her part it will be easy. No day

passes without receiving tokens of this foreign sister's affection. They still call her our Indian."

Poor Maurice and poor Caro! What a singular honeymoon they spent in Rue du Cherche-Midi, with Eugénie insisting on nursing her brother, with Mlle. Laforest suffering from rheumatism and feeling that Maurice was monopolizing her niece! A tempest was brewing, even if the good breeding of the three women prevented them from giving full expression to their feelings. The atmosphere grew more tense and strained and did not take long to react unfavorably on the health of Maurice.

Eugénie had at first manifested her intention to live with the young couple and settle in Paris. Very soon she had to give up her plans; but not having the courage to go back to Le Cayla, unwilling to leave Maurice entirely to Caroline, she accepted Mme. de Maistre's invitation to spend a few weeks at Les Coques. That she knew of Maurice's sentiments for her, there is little doubt. She felt that the Baronne would sympathize with her, since she also had been to some extent forsaken by Maurice.

To go to Nevers in midwinter by the stage-coach was in those days quite an adventure. It was with the most vivid apprehensions that the family saw Eugénie start out in the coupé of the diligence, in queer com-

pany—"horrible workmen, and I know not what," wrote Maurice to Baronne de Maistre. As a week later she had not been heard from, Guérin wrote a very anxious letter to Les Coques, in which he shows himself a *patrician* as much and more than Eugénie herself.

Eugénie was not disappointed in Mme. de Maistre. "That assurance so vainly sought in others, God has granted to me here in the most intelligent soul, the most capable of filling my need of affection with happiness," she wrote to Louise de Bayne. Caro, however devoted and affectionate, was somewhat childish and ingenuous, and evidently could not understand and share the same feelings, but with Baronne de Maistre, Eugénie communed as she had never been able to do with her sister-in-law. She wrote enthusiastic letters from Les Coques to her father, to Louise de Bayne—another forsaken one, an earlier love of Maurice—and Maurice more than ever hoped that Eugénie would bring the Baronne back to Paris:

"We would see you, and one of our wishes would thus be fulfilled. Do you fulfill it, Madame, since you have the power to do so. If heaven can be touched by a heart's sincerity, it will make you feel the effect of all our wishes with regard to your sufferings, and to so many other deserts less vexing to yourself and to us." (Ms. Jan. 3, 1839.)

Alone with his wife, Maurice was completely won over by so much tenderness and devoted care. When Eugénie came back with Mme. de Maistre, she was ready to grant that her sister-in-law was "an excellent little wife, most attentive to Maurice. As for Maurice, he behaved perfectly. He was a hundred percent better than last year," she wrote in a letter to her father. Then she added significantly: "He always places the same confidence in me."

But Maurice had one coughing fit after another. "Fever, emaciation, paleness, insomnia, lack of appetite," wrote Eugénie to Louise de Bayne at the beginning of March. "Oh Lord, how I suffer! Must we lose this dear brother?" Soon the same rivalry as before developed around the sickbed of the patient, and Eugénie spent entire nights anxiously listening to the hollow cough of the poor young husband echoing through the house. She became again "an apple of discord," as she said herself. It was understood that Maurice would leave for Le Cayla whenever he might be in condition to stand the journey, but Eugénie could not stay longer in Paris, and she accompanied Mme. de Maistre to Les Coques in the spring of 1839.

At the beginning of June, it was realized that the only chance to prolong Maurice's life was to take him to a healthier climate, even if the journey were hazard-

ous. It was decided that he should go to Le Cayla with his wife, and that the aunt should stay in Paris. Such a decision was not readily reached by Mlle. Laforest, as we may surmise from a letter written by Eugénie to Barbey d'Aurevilly on June 15th. She wanted Barbey there to prevent an explosion of tears, and perhaps some bitter words, when the aunt and the niece should separate—a painful scene that would hurt Maurice. But it is to Barbey and not to Caroline that she sends her last instructions for Maurice's journey:

“Let him take his homeopathic drugs, a travelling pillow, and a certain casket of which I spoke to him. I would like to know that you are beside him until he enters the diligence, both for his pleasure and for his well-being. He will need a certain backing and nerve tonic amidst the tears and hysterics that will surround him.”
(Ms. June 15, 1839.)

Evidently, in Eugénie's opinion, Maurice's wife could not be trusted to look after such details.

She joined her brother and her sister-in-law at Tours, and the three started on the harrowing journey south. They had to stop frequently, whenever Maurice was seized with fresh paroxysms of coughing; once in a hut by the wayside, without any means of relieving his sufferings. They finally reached Le Cayla at the

beginning of July, neither Maurice nor his wife realizing the hopelessness of his condition, but hoping against hope. Not so Eugénie, whose only comfort during the day was to sit at the bedside of her brother, alone with him, while Caroline was visiting Bordeaux.

The rest of the story is told in the published letters of Eugénie and in her *Journal*; the alternatives of hope and despair, the Christian resignation to the unescapable, the timid and cautious approach of Eugénie, her loving and hesitant probing of Maurice's soul—for if no hope were left for the body, the soul had to be saved. Too weak to write himself, Maurice asked his sister to write Barbey, and she did it when he was slumbering in feverish drowsiness. The letter has unfortunately been torn and badly damaged; only the concluding sentences remain, in which Maurice, coming out from his sleep, "touched Barbey's hand" and sent him his love, "the strong love of a man for a man." (Ms. July 22, 1839.)

Hardly a week later Eugénie wrote Madame de Maistre: "The time has come, no more hope; the doctor has said the terrible 'There is no remedy!' and made mention of the last rites. O dear friend, let us pray God for this precious soul! Above all others I am thinking of you, and I could not refrain from writing to you, to unite you to my heart, my tears, and our

afflicted family." While she was writing, preparations for the last rites were being made. Maurice died a few hours later.

In a most beautiful and simple style she wrote in her *Journal* the account of his last moments: "He was still alive, he could hear us, he could choose between a cup of herb tea and a glass of water; he pressed the hand of M. le Curé, who was speaking of heaven, he fastened his lips to a small crucifix presented by his wife, then he grew weaker. We all began to kiss him, and he began to die. Friday, July 19, 1839, at half past eleven in the morning. Eleven days after our arrival at Cayla. Eight months after his marriage."

The next letter in our collection has little bearing on Maurice de Guérin. It is given here as an interesting sidelight on Barbey, who seems to have attempted to enroll Mme. de Maistre in some kind of counterplot against the Carlists, and to have attempted to use her as an *agent provocateur*. The conclusion alone contains an allusion to the death of Maurice:

"Since a great loss, I have not had the chance to see you or to write you. From what I knew of this deep and strong friendship, it had been better for you had you never enjoyed it—you would not know how much you lost. They say good wishes of people struck by lightning bring ill-luck, so I dare address none to you." (Ms. Dec. 26, 1839.)

Only many years later did Mme. de Maistre trust Barbey d'Aurevilly and Trébutien with the love-letters she had received from Maurice, and give them permission to copy some of them. Four years after the death of the poet, Barbey could write to Trébutien: "On the arm of Guérin, supported by the memory of Guérin, I entered the life of this woman and penetrated deeply into it, as those anchors that neither storms nor human effort can dislodge from the spot where they have been cast. I am sealed and welded to this soul as a broken sword in a wound."

He had also entered the life of Eugénie under the same aegis. To her, Barbey represented a Maurice she had never completely known, the Parisian; the artistic life of Maurice was puzzling, disquieting, incomprehensible, but dear and precious as anything that would recall his memory. The dandy and the ardent Catholic woman from southern France communed in the same devotion for the "brother" they had lost, and Barbey could truly call her his "sister," in the affectionate letters he wrote after the death of Maurice.

But while the sister in a sort of vision saw Maurice surrounded by a radiant aureole and heard him calling: "Come, dear sister, and join me in the bosom of God!" Barbey was more practically occupied with salvaging, while yet there was time, whatever

could be collected of literary fragments left by his friend.

Except for a few articles and the hack work done during his early student years, Maurice had not published a single line of the poems, sketches and compositions he had read and discussed with his friend and master. Very soon after the death of Maurice, Barbey formed the plan of publishing the *Reliquiae* of Maurice de Guérin, but before doing anything himself he communicated to George Sand fifteen precious letters he had received from Maurice, the fragment of a poem, *Glaucus*, and the famous prose poem of surpassing beauty, *Le Centaure*. She wrote for the two fragments an enthusiastic introduction which appeared in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, June 15, 1840.

The George Sand of 1840, surrounded with a reputation of infidelity and impiety, wearing men's clothing and smoking cigars, was scarcely the writer under whose auspices Eugénie would have chosen to see her brother presented to the public. In letters to Louise de Bayne, to Mme. de Maistre, to Hippolyte de la Morvonnais, she expressed at once her gratitude for the praise given Maurice, and her deep mortification at realizing that George Sand had emphasized a side of Maurice's character with which she was not acquainted.

"Mme. Sand has written an article, very noble, very beautiful, but incomplete and even false from the religious point of view," she wrote Louise de Bayne. "Maurice is pictured as a Werther or a Byron; some of his friends intend to make a portrait of him more pure, more true as a tribute to his Christian memory." Curiously enough, in a letter to Mme. de Maistre on the same subject, she seemed to believe that the article had been written at the suggestion of Sainte-Beuve. But it is only in the letter to Barbey d'Aurevilly here published, the last of our sheaf, that she expressed herself fully and completely.

Evidently she had been deeply wounded in her Catholic faith and in her devotion to her brother by the passages in which George Sand declared that "Guérin has not loved nature as a poet only; he felt for it a true idolatry. He was a pantheist in the manner of Goethe, without knowing or perhaps caring greatly for the Greeks. In them he saw only the depositaries of the sacred myth of Cybele."

Pious and charitable as she was, Eugénie de Guérin could scratch. Not wrongly had Barbey d'Aurevilly observed in her the earmarks of the true patrician, and this time the patrician obliterated the Christian. "I do not know her," she wrote Barbey. "I only know that her doctrines are supposed to be very wicked. Speak-

ing one day with Maurice of her and of Mme. de Staël, and asking him whether these two famous women had anything in common: 'Oh,' said he, 'Mme. de Staël is much more of a gentlewoman; the other is a woman of the people.' "

But this was not the important point; the only thing that mattered was that the picture drawn by Mme. Sand was incomplete and presented Maurice in a false light. Barbey and his friends were interested only in the artist. They had known Guérin when he was not truly himself; when, under the influence of the great city, ill health, bad reading, and material preoccupation, he had been caught in the current of modern pessimism and modern incredulity. What they could not know was that during his last days he had become a Christian again, that he had found a refuge in the faith of his childhood and his ancestors. During these short weeks at Le Cayla, Eugénie had seen him not only accept but yearn for the consolations of religion; she was present at his deathbed, when he pressed the crucifix to his lips. According to her faith, this last act of true repentance and belief could wash away all the sins of his worldly life and entirely redeem him. It was the only, but also the strongest, assurance she could have that the soul of Maurice had found eternal rest and eternal bliss. How little in comparison mat-

tered a few poems, a few pages—impregnated with beauty to be sure, but pagan beauty none the less! At least if it were thought that these pages belonged to posterity, no biography of Maurice could be true and just that did not call attention to his edifying and truly Christian death. She had never dreamed that from *Le Centaure* anyone would conclude that Maurice was a pantheist, any more than she would deem Fénelon a Greek after reading *Le Télémaque*.

This eloquent letter, in which, under strong emotional strain, Eugénie attained the highest summits, would alone warrant the present publication. To justify her brother she used all her ingenuity and found splendid and striking images worthy of Chateaubriand and Renan. No more fitting epigraph for a biography of Maurice de Guérin could be found than the two sentences in which she brought together the two contradictory aspects of her brother's nature:

“An act of faith, a single act of faith, transformed him and made of his soul what the Cross made of the Pantheon at Rome—to the only God, although built for all the gods!”

No less striking, and hardly less magnificent, is the other sentence in which she begs d'Aurevilly to do justice to her brother and write a life of Maurice as only he could write it: “I should be happy, my tears

❧ INTRODUCTION ❧

would stop, if on the cenotaph you promised to carve for him, I could see the sign of the faith, the spotless escutcheon of the Christian, which was not placed on the first monument.”

GILBERT CHINARD.

Baltimore,
April, 1928

POSTSCRIPTUM

I cannot presume to let my name appear in these pages without a word of explanation. It was M. Chinard who recognized the value of these letters and transcribed them, while to Mme. Chinard I owe the elucidation of many obscure passages in my translation, and many suggestions for its betterment. Therefore I must express my appreciation and accept no undue credit.

In the text of the letters here published, the original spelling has been reproduced. Accents have been added, and capitals introduced at the beginning of sentences. Words crossed out by Maurice are bracketed in the text. In the translation, full use has been made of punctuation, usually absent in the original.

H. BEDFORD-JONES.

PART TWO

THE LETTERS



THE LETTERS

Letter No. 1

Samedi 5 Xbre

(Pauvre enfant! de la main d'Eugénie.)

Tu dois attendre impatiemment, ma chère Eugénie, cette lettre furtive qui a sans-doute piqué ta curiosité et peut-être éveillé des alarmes. Il me semble te voir te creusant l'imagination pour deviner ce qu'elle contiendra en attendant le jour de la révélation; aussi je m'empresse de te satisfaire et de me satisfaire moi-même car depuis long-temps j'appellois [*sic*] l'heureux instant où je pourrois me décharger du poids qui m'accable et confier mes peines à un coeur comme le tien, car la confidence guérit à moitié.

C'est donc avec la plus douce consolation que je prends la plume pour commencer une lettre sur laquelle reposent toutes mes espérances. Je m'explique. Tu as du t'appercevoir durant les vacances de la bizarrerie de mon imagination et de la foiblesse de mon caractère; le peu de séjour que j'ai fait au Cayla a



THE LETTERS

Letter No. 1

Saturday, Dec. 5 (1829)

(Annotated "Poor Child!" in the hand of Eugénie.)

My dear Eugénie, you must be impatiently awaiting this secret letter, the expectancy of which has doubtless spurred your curiosity and perhaps awakened your alarm. I seem to see you exhausting your imagination to conjecture what it may contain, while you await the day of revelation. So I hasten to satisfy you and myself alike, since I have long invoked the happy moment when I might rid myself of the load weighing upon me by confiding my trouble to such a heart as yours—for confession is half the cure. So, in sweetest consolation, I take up my pen to begin the letter upon which reposes all my hopes.

Let me explain. During vacation you must have noticed the extravagance of my imagination and the weakness of my character; I believe my brief stay at Cayla sufficed to give you a general idea of my moral

suffi, je crois, pour te donner une idée générale de ma constitution morale, mais tu n'as pu pénétrer jusqu'au fond, tu n'as soulevé qu'un coin du voile et ma vie intellectuelle n'est qu'imparfaitement connue de toi. Cependant il est important et très important que tu la connoisses et voilà pourquoi je te révèle aujourd'hui le mystère de mon existence.

D'abord je te prévien que tout ce que tu vas lire n'est pas le fruit de mes rêveries, ni les [imagination] folles idées d'un jeune homme qui se crée des maux imaginaires parce qu'il trouve une beauté poétique dans la souffrance. J'abandonne aux Romantiques leurs visions et je ne m'occupe maintenant que du positif, du réel, de ce qui passe dans mon coeur, non à la suite d'un caprice d'imagination, mais par l'effet constant de ma conformation morale, des lois de mon être. J'entre dans le monde, je jette un coup d'oeil sur la carrière à parcourir et je reporte ensuite mon regard sur moi-même pour juger si j'aurai assez de force pour la fournir jusqu'au bout. Je compare mes moyens aux obstacles que j'ai à vaincre et voici le résultat de la comparaison: depuis que ma raison a acquis assez de force pour se replier sur elle-même, et pour chercher à accomplir le précepte de l'antique sagesse, connois-toi toi-même, je me suis aperçu de la foiblesse ou plutôt de la nullité de mon caractère, et une expérience jour-

makeup, but you could not have plumbed its depths—you could only have raised a corner of the veil, and my intellectual life is only partially known to you. However it is important, very important, that you should fully comprehend it; this is why I am today revealing to you the mystery of my existence.

First, let me tell you that all you are about to read is neither the fruit of idle revery nor the wild notions of a young man who creates for himself imaginary ills because he finds a poetic beauty in suffering. I leave their visions to the Romantics and here speak only of the actual, of the positive, of what takes place in my heart—not arising from a caprice of the imagination, but from my moral organization, from the laws of my being.

I go forth into the world, I glance at my predestined career, then survey myself to determine whether I have the necessary strength to follow it to the end. I compare my ability with the obstacles I must overcome—and here is the result of the comparison:

From the time my mind gained the power of introspection, of seeking to obey the precept of ancient wisdom—Know Thyself!—I have perceived the weakness, or rather the negation, of my own character, and daily experience has but confirmed this opinion. What is necessary to him who would succeed in the world?

nalière n'a que trop confirmé ce jugement. Que faut-il à l'homme qui veut parvenir dans le monde? Une finesse d'esprit qui cherche, démêle, suit à la piste pour ainsi dire, les moyens qui doivent la faire parvenir à son but, une souplesse de caractère qui fait qu'il se plie aux circonstances, qu'il se montre tantôt humble et suppliant, tantôt fier et impératif, enfin une constance inébranlable, une énergie qui absorbe tout, qui résiste à tout et qui se relève toujours triomphante du rêve, avec cela on fait son chemin. Mais à côté d'un homme doué de ces qualités mettez un individu gauche, maladroit, un individu dont le caractère est de n'en avoir point, absolument dénué de cette adresse si commune qui sait se frayer un chemin et se créer une existence; un individu qui ne sait pas le moins du monde ce que c'est que la force, l'énergie, la constance, qui ne se tient debout qu'autant qu'on le soutient, et qui pour un mot, un regard, un rien tombe dans le plus complet découragement, qui dans sa *rêverie* ne sait que pleurer et pas autre chose, il fera mieux de se retirer à l'écart que d'aller s'embarquer dans un monde où la fortune ne favorise que les audacieux. Eh bien cet individu, c'est moi trait pour trait: que dis-je trait pour trait? Je me trompe, car comment te dépeindre mon incroyable foiblesse. Pour t'en donner une idée: tu n'as pas oublié sans doute ce funeste jour où une froideur appa-

A keen mind which seeks, unravels, as it were trails down, every means of arriving at its goal; a supple character which yields to circumstance, now showing itself humble and suppliant, now proud and dictatory; above all, an iron resolution, an energy which absorbs everything and resists everything, and which ever rises triumphant over dreams. With such a character, a man can achieve his destiny!

Then, opposite the man gifted with these qualities, place an awkward and ill-skilled individual, whose whole character is to have none; an individual absolutely devoid of the common address which knows how to make its own way, create its own existence; an individual who has no idea in the world as to what constitutes strength, energy, resolution, and who upholds himself only so long as someone else sustains him—who at a word, a look, a nothing, falls into utter despondency—who in his dream-life finds himself apt at nothing but weeping. Such a man might better withdraw afar than embark upon a career where fortune favors only the brave! Well, then, this individual is, trait for trait, myself. Do I say “trait for trait”? I deceive myself; how can I depict for you my incredible feebleness?

To give you an idea of it: Doubtless you recall that sad day when a seeming coldness appeared to have

rente sembloit avoir altéré notre amitié. Eh bien quelle en étoit la cause? Le croirois-tu, par une bizarrerie de mon caractère bien condamnable, sans doute, je ne t'avois pas adressé la parole de toute une journée; cette boutade passée, je n'ai plus osé te parler, je tremblois devant toi, et il a fallu que tu aies la première rompu le silence. Hélas! Faut-il que ma foiblesse t'ait coûté des larmes que je me reprocherai toujours. Juge d'après cela de ce que je ferai dans le monde. Dieu! si tu pouvois pénétrer mes pensées, tu ne verrois qu'une suite non interrompue d'hésitations, d'abattements, de découragements, de misère qui me suivroit partout, ce qui fait de mon existence une souffrance continuelle. Les actions les plus indifférentes pour les autres me coutent les plus violents efforts. Joins à cela l'imagination la plus bizarre, la plus persécutrice et tu auras une foible idée de ce que je suis. Et avec cela je fais mon droit, et avec cela je me destine à l'état qui demande le plus cette adresse, cette énergie, cette constance, qui me manquent absolument! O foiblesse cruelle qui me fermera toujours la bouche, qui me fera entrer dans le monde pour lequel je ne suis pas fait et qui fera ainsi de mon existence un long martyre! J'ai voulu cependant l'autre jour amener Auguste sur ce sujet, il m'a dit que c'étoit une absurdité, qu'il falloit savoir surmonter et vaincre son caractère. Oui, je conçois fort

blighted our friendship. And what caused it? By a quirk of character, doubtless most reprehensible, I had not spoken a word to you for a whole day; this whim past, I dared not address you, I trembled before you, and you had to be the first to break silence—alas! My weakness must have cost you tears with which I shall ever reproach myself!

Judge by this, then, what I would accomplish in the world. God! If you could pierce to my brain you would see only an endless procession of hesitations, of despondencies, of discouragements, of misery that follows me everywhere and turns my existence into a continual agony! Actions, quite usual to others, cost me violent efforts. To this add a most extravagant and tormenting imagination, and you will have a feeble idea of what I am. With such equipment I study law—with such equipment I am destined to the profession which, more than any other, demands this shrewdness, this energy, this resolution, entirely lacking in me. Cruel weakness, which even renders me dumb, which makes me enter a life for which I was not made, and which will thus render my existence a long martyrdom!

The other day, however, I drew out Auguste¹ on this subject. He said it was absurd; that one must learn how to surmount and overcome one's own char-

¹ The "Auguste" here mentioned is Auguste Raynaud, professor in the Collège Bourbon, cousin and mentor of Maurice.

bien que ceux qui se sentent un peu de force dans l'âme parlent de vaincre le caractère, ils sentent et parlent d'après eux, ils peuvent se vaincre parce qu'ils en ont les moyens, mais avec quoi me vaincrais-je, moi? La foiblesse et le découragement peuvent-ils vaincre la foiblesse et le découragement? Où irai-je chercher l'énergie dans moi? Comment donner la vie à ce qui est mort? (déchirure) Dieu! Il faudra toujours qu'on me pousse et il faudra qu'on me tienne toujours en lisière et je languirai dans une éternelle enfance. Avec cela j'avancerai bien vite vers l'agrandissement tandis qu'une infinité d'autres qui ont du savoir-faire n'ont pu encore avancer d'un pas? Je le dis depuis long-temps, je suis fait pour le cloître ou pour la solitude. Hors de là je serai un arbre stérile, et cependant c'est sur moi qu'on fonde des espérances. Qu'il est cruel de ne pouvoir remplir celles d'un père! Mais il y auroit un moyen de la remplir en partie, ce seroit de me retirer du monde où je ferai jamais rien, pour m'adonner à l'agriculture, de soulager papa dans ses vieux ans, au lieu de dépenser inutilement de l'argent à l'étude d'une science dont je ne saurai jamais me servir. Mais me diroit-on, où vous mènera votre agriculture? Elle me donnera toujours de quoi soutenir mon existence qui s'écoulera doucement auprès de ce que j'ai de plus cher au monde. Je serai si vous voulez l'homme d'affaires

acter. Yes; I can well conceive how those who feel power in their own souls can speak of overcoming character, for they feel and speak according to their own nature—they can overcome themselves, having the means. But with what shall I overcome myself? Can weakness and discouragement overcome weakness and discouragement? Where shall I seek the power within myself—how bring to life what is dead? God! someone must always shove me forward, someone must always hold me in leading-strings; I linger in an eternal infancy! Can I thus grow up at rapid strides while others, who know how to act, are not able to advance a step?

I have long since said that I was made for the cloister or for solitude; otherwise, I shall be a sterile tree. Yet it is on me that great hopes are founded—how cruel, not to be able to fulfill those of a father! Yet there were one way of partially fulfilling them—to retire from a life where I can never accomplish anything, in order to take up agriculture; to comfort father in his old age, in place of vainly spending money acquiring knowledge which I shall never be able to use.

But, you say, whither would your agriculture lead you? It will always give me the wherewithal to sustain my existence, which will run evenly near all that

de mon père. J'aime mieux ça que de vivre dans le monde où je serai toujours misérable. Aussi je te supplie par tout l'attachement que tu as pour moi, d'insinuer peu à peu ces idées à papa, qu'il me retire à lui le plutôt (*sic*) possible. Et s'il faut attendre jusqu'à l'année prochaine: fais en sorte qu'il me fasse venir en vacances: une fois que je serai délivré de ce Paris qui me pèse sur les épaules de tout son poids, je tâcherai de n'y plus rentrer en faisant entendre à papa ce dont il n'est pas je crois très éloigné. Emploie, je te prie toute ton adresse et toute ta constance pour venir à bout de ce projet sur lequel je fonde mon bonheur. Ton pauvre frère t'en supplie au nom de son plus cher intérêt.

Voilà, chère E. ce que j'avois à te communiquer. Mon coeur se sent soulagé après cette confidence; je me console de mes maux présents en pensant qu'ils auront un terme. C'est en toi que j'espère, c'est de toi que me viendra mon bonheur, et c'est avec toi que je veux en jouir en t'aimant toujours.

MAURICE

Ne déchire pas cette lettre, mais serre-la. Tu pourras t'en servir dans l'occasion auprès de papa.

Je te jure ma parole d'honneur que L. n'est pour rien là dedans. Tu penses bien que je ne ferais pas

I hold dearest in the world. I shall be, if you like, the business agent of my father—I had sooner do this than live in a society where I must ever be miserable. By all your love for me, I beg you to inculcate these ideas gradually in father, that he may bring me back to him as soon as possible. If it is necessary to wait until next year, manage it so that he will summon me at vacation. Once rid of this Paris, which presses on my shoulders with all its weight, I will try never to return, by making father understand these things—I think he is not far from realizing them. I beseech you, employ all your skill and resolution in bringing success to this project on which I build all my happiness! Your poor brother supplicates you in the name of all that is dearest to him.

There, dear E., is what I had to impart to you. After this confession, my heart feels comforted, and I console myself for present evils by hoping that they will have an end. It is in you that I hope; from you my happiness must come; and with you I want to enjoy it, while loving you always.

MAURICE

Do not tear up this letter, but keep it; you may have occasion to make use of it with father.

I pledge you my word of honor that L. does not enter into this. You may be certain that I would not intrude so light a motive in so important a matter.

entrer un si léger motif dans une démarche si importante. Tiens-moi au cours de cette affaire sans en laisser rien transpirer. Tu adresserais ta lettre Rue St. Jacques No. 191, mais au lieu de M. Guérin tu écriras M. Chabannes sur l'enveloppe et M. Guérin dessous. J'aurois encore bien des choses à dire, bien des raisons à donner, mais la plus forte c'est l'inviolable loi de la nature.

Mademoiselle Eugénie de Guérin

au Cayla par Cordes

Tarn.

Cachets: 6 Déc. 1829.

10 Déc. 1829.

Keep me informed of this affair without letting anything leak out. Address your letter to 191 Rue St. Jacques, but instead of M. Guérin, write M. Chabannes on the envelope, with M. Guérin below. I still have many things to say, many reasons to adduce—but the strongest is the inviolable law of nature.

Mademoiselle Eugénie de Guérin

at Cayla, via Cordes, Tarn.

Postmarked: Dec. 6, 1829.

Dec. 10, 1829.

Letter No. 2

Paris, 10 Xbre (1834)

Je suis au collège, mon ami, seul dans ma chambre sans feu et ressentant un étrange malaise intérieur. De quelle nature suis-je donc qu'il me survienne toujours de ces états nouveaux contre lesquels je ne puis rien préparer, qu'il se découvre à chaque moment quelque autre infirmité par quelque côté où je n'avais pas d'inquiétude. Aujourd'hui cette pauvre imagination par qui je vis d'habitude, d'où découle tout ce qui circule en moi de joies ignorées et de ces transports occultes dont rien ne va se perdre au dehors, cette pauvre imagination a tari. Quand je dis aujourd'hui je ne dis pas assez, car il y aura tantôt huit jours que ma vie intérieure a commencé de diminuer, que le fleuve a baissé se réduisant par un décroissement si sensible qu'après quelques tours de soleil il n'était plus qu'un petit filet d'eau. Aujourd'hui j'ai vu passer sa dernière goutte.

J'étends au large le sens du mot imagination: c'est pour moi le nom de la vie intérieure, l'appellation collective des plus belles facultés de l'âme, de celles qui revêtent les idées de la parure des images comme de celles qui tournées vers l'infini, méditent perpétuellement l'invisible et l'imaginent avec des images d'origine inconnue et de forme ineffable. Ceci est peu

*Letter No. 2*¹

Paris, Dec. 10 (1834)

I am at college, my friend, alone in my fireless room and conscious of a singular inner uneasiness. Of what composition am I, that I should ever be a prey to some new mood against which I have raised no defense—that each moment should discover some fresh weakness at some unguarded point? Today this sorry imagination, by which I habitually live, whence springs all my cycle of obscure delights and of those occult raptures never emerging outside myself—this sorry imagination has run dry. When I say “today,” I do not say enough; it is now eight days since my inner existence began to lessen, since the flood began to ebb, subsiding in such a marked degree that after some courses of the sun there remained only a tiny thread of water. Today I have seen the last drop drained.

I extend the usual meaning of the word “imagination.” For me, it is the name of the inner existence, the generic appellation of the most beautiful faculties of the spirit, those that deck out ideas in the shape of pictures, and those that look toward the infinite, ever meditating on the invisible and conceiving it in forms of mysterious origin and shapes ineffable. All this is scarcely philosophy, and is oddly estranged from any

¹ This letter was, in part, included in the *Journal de Maurice de Guérin*, 1864, p. 104.

philosophique et s'écarte étrangement de la psychologie connue; mais à cet égard je m'inquiète peu des hommes et des arrangements qu'ils ont fait de nos facultés; je brise leurs systèmes qui m'entravent et je m'en vais libre, le plus loin d'eux qu'il est possible, reconstruire une âme et un monde selon mon gré. Je me suis jeté dans cette *explanation* pour ne pas trop vous étonner avec mon extinction subite d'imagination. Je ne puis croire assurément que nos plus vives facultés meurent comme un flambeau vacillant et que toutes les sources intérieures se ferment [soudain] tout d'un coup comme frappées de malédiction. Mais il est irrécusable que la vie s'interrompt, que le fleuve des joies secrètes suspend sa course pour livrer passage à des tribus d'amertume et de désolations inconnues. Je souffre cette terrible invasion. Je prête l'oreille en moi-même et je n'entends plus rien de ce qui me charmait. Bruissements subtils et mêlés, chœurs ondoyants de voix reculées, répercussions des chants intimes de la nature, tout ce beau torrent de rumeurs a cessé. Comme un homme qui marche dans la nuit muni d'un flambeau, à mesure que j'avais les objets semblaient se revêtir d'un éclat vif et doux tout ensemble, et sous cette lumière la forme adoucie et vivifiée semblait se complaire comme dans son fluide, et goûter je ne sais quelles voluptés qui animaient sa physionomie et lui

known psychology; but in this respect I take small heed of men and their classification of our faculties. I shatter their systems which shackle me and seek freedom, as far from them as possible, to reconstruct a spirit and a world after my own desire.

I fling myself into this explanation in order not to astonish you overmuch by the sudden extinction of my imagination. Assuredly, I cannot believe that our most active faculties should die like a vacillating flame, and that all the inner springs should suddenly dry up as though smitten by a curse. But it is undeniable that this life is interrupted; that the flood of secret joys suspends its course to give passage to incursions of bitterness and of unknown despairs. I suffer from this terrible invasion. I listen to myself and can no longer hear all that charmed me.

The vague and subtle whispers, the undulant chorus of distant voices, the echoes of nature's inward music—all this lovely stream of murmurs has ceased. Like a man walking in the night with a torch, as I went forward everything seemed clad in a splendor at once vivid yet sweet; and in this light, as in a fluid, the sharpened yet softened scene appeared to take on new delights and to enjoy I know not what voluptuous pleasure, which enlivened its traits and gave it unguessed beauties. Today, I cast only shadows around

donnaient des beautés qu'on n'a pas vues. Aujourd'hui, je ne projette que de l'ombre, toute forme est opaque et frappée de mort. Comme dans une marche nocturne je m'avance avec le sentiment isolé de mon existence parmi les fantômes inertes de toutes choses.

Vous me demandez une lettre qui coupe la monotonie de votre solitude et je vous mande des tristesses, des étrangetés ennuyeuses, l'assoupissante rumeur de mes pensées. Vraiment, je crains fort que cette feuille en dépit de son étendue soit aussi mal venue que la *Lilliputienne*. En vérité, mon ami, vous me croirez atteint de paralysie, me voyant regimber si peu sous l'aiguillon des premières lignes de votre lettre. Vous vous attendiez peut-être à quelque vivacité, à une plainte, à un petit cri. Peut-être étiez-vous curieux de connaître le timbre de ma voix irritée, de voir les allures de mon dépit. Mon bel Apollon au carquois retentissant.

Vous avez perdu votre visée et vos flèches,
 Vous auriez bien voulu me faire souffler
 dans le fifre aigu,
 J'ai continué tranquillement sur ma flûte.

M. Ballanche publie une correspondance platonique d'une princesse de la maison de Bourbon, vers la fin du dernier siècle. On en dit des merveilles. Je vous le

me, every vista is opaque and death-struck; as in a nocturnal walk, I bear forward the lonely realization of my own existence among the inert phantoms of all things around.

You ask me for a letter which may relieve the monotony of your solitude, and I comply with melancholy, with wearisome oddities, with the soporific murmur of my thoughts! In fact, I much fear lest this page, despite its size, prove as unwelcome as the Lilliputian. Truly, my friend, you would believe me struck with paralysis, could you see me react so slightly to the goad in the first lines of your letter. Perchance you expected some vivacity, a complaint, a sharp cry! Perchance you were curious to learn the timbre of my irritated voice, to see the garb of my chagrin. My fine Apollo of the resounding quiver,

“You have lost your aim and your shafts,
You sought to make me play upon the sharp-
noted fife,
But I have continued quietly upon my flute!”

M. Ballanche publishes the platonic correspondence of a princess of the Bourbon line, toward the end of the past century. They say it is marvellous. I pass on the word very candidly and on the faith of hearsay; however, I incline to believe it. But you, cruel one

répète très naïvement et sur la foi de l'oui-dire. Je penche à le croire d'ailleurs. Mais, vous, vous immolerez du même trait l'éditeur et l'éditée ces douces et belles amies, cruel. Et si je vous annonçais que M. . . . (son nom m'échappe) va ouvrir un cours de *mystique*, vous empoisonneriez un dard tout exprès. Il a vécu long-temps en Allemagne et l'on en parle comme d'un homme qui rayonnera beaucoup s'il se dévoile.

Je regrette bien que votre frère vous laisse revenir seul. J'espère que si vous n'emmenez pas le poète, vous emmenez du moins la poésie.

Chose étrange—pas un mot dans toute cette lettre de *lui*, de son cher et triste souvenir. L'oubli des trépassés aimés serait-il donc possible? Oh non. *Sa* pensée se cache sous le tissu de toutes ces vaines et folles pensées—il y a bien des tombes sous le gazon verdoyant.

Si vous avez le temps, envoyez-moi quelques mots, comme la douce haleine du retour.

Tout votre

MCE DE GUÉRIN

Monsier Léon d'Aurevilly

Place St. Sauveur chez M. Joyau avocat

Caen Calvados.

Cachets: 11 Dec. 1834

CAEN 12 Dec. 1834.

—you will flay with the same stroke the publisher and the published, those sweet and tender friends! And if I tell you that M . . . —his name escapes me—is about to open a course of mysticism, you will dip a special dart in poison! He has long lived in Germany, and they speak of him as of a man who will shed much light if he unveils himself.

I much regret that your brother leaves you to return alone. I hope that if you do not bring me the poet, you will at least bring the poetry.

A strange thing—not a word in all this letter of *him*, of his sad and tender memory. Is forgetfulness of dead loves then possible? Ah, no! His remembrance is hidden under the weft of all these vain and idle thoughts—there are many graves beneath the springing grass.

If you have time, send me some words, like a sweet zephyr of return.

All yours,

MCE DE GUÉRIN

*M. Léon d'Aurevilly,
Place St. Sauveur, chez M. Joyau avocat,
Caen, Calvados.*

Postmarked: Dec. 11, 1834.

CAEN, Dec. 12, 1834.

Letter No. 3

Vendredi (8 Mars 1835)

Quand je me promène seul ou avec vous, la vie me sourit, et je l'accepte avec grâce, je fais même de la philosophie. Je dresse de beaux plans de morale, mon courage s'enfle, et il me semble que je suis stoïcien. Mais sitôt rentré et remis à la tâche, je m'affaïsse, tout se rompt en moi, c'est une ruine désolante. Je vous le dis avec la pudeur profonde d'un aveu de faiblesse, je souffre misérablement dans la moindre fraction de la durée et pour des sujets imperceptibles à tout autre que moi. Je m'ensanglante cruellement à des épines où s'arrêteraient à peine les derniers plis de votre toge. Ma position matérielle est la cause de tous ces maux. Je la déteste, et je suis contraint de l'embrasser étroitement. J'invoque de toute mes forces une interruption du chemin où je suis poussé, et je ne vois pas qu'il puisse cesser, sinon avec ma vie. Mon ami, vous êtes le seul des hommes où je puise de la force morale: suggérez-moi, non quelque remède à ce qui est irréparable dans la situation de ma vie, mais un peu de l'abondance de votre énergie. Apprenez-moi à souffrir. Je n'avais pas dessein de vous écrire aujourd'hui, puisque j'attends une lettre de vous, mais un de ces atômes qui s'amassent sur ma vie et qui la dévorent est survenu et me touche si cruellement que je pousse des cris de souff-

Letter No. 3

Friday (Mar. 8, 1835)

When I walk abroad, alone or with you, life smiles upon me and I accept it gracefully, even becoming a philosopher. I draw up fine schemes of ethics, my courage is inflated, and I look upon myself as a stoic. But as soon as I come home and take up my task, I am depressed, everything in me is shattered and becomes a grievous ruin. I tell you this with the profound shame that shrouds a confession of weakness. In the least fraction of time, I suffer miserably, and for causes that would be imperceptible to anyone else. I bleed terribly on thorns which would scarce prick at the passing folds of your toga.

My material position is the cause of all these ills. I detest it, yet I am forced to embrace it closely. With all my might I invoke some barrier to the road on which I am pushed, yet I cannot see where it will end except with my life. My friend, you are the only man who lends me moral courage; hold out to me, not some remedy for that which is irreparable in my state of life, but some of your own abundant energy! Teach me to suffer.

I had not planned to write you today, since I am expecting a letter from you; but one of those atoms which weigh upon my life and devour it, has appeared

france vers vous. Ce matin, j'ai désiré vivement la mort. Hélas! si elle venait je lui dirais peut-être de m'aider à recharger mon fardeau. C'est là le dernier trait de la misère des hommes. Je suis presque coupable de souffrir tant je dégrade mes douleurs par la foiblesse. Vous ne saurez jamais, vous, ce qui se passe dans ce tombeau de l'abattement où mon âme est ensevelie. Elle y est bien autrement rongée que les corps dans les sépulcres, je puis vous l'assurer. Ma vie sera toute ainsi. Avez-vous vu de ces fruits tombés de la branche, que dépècent des myriades de fourmis et qu'elles emportent brin à brin dans leur demeure? Je suis de ces fruits tombés. Je suis désarmé contre la souffrance comme un enfant.

Avec vous seul je respire de ma vie et des hommes.

Si vous saviez comme ma vie est misérable.

Adieu, à dimanche pour vous voir.

Mce

Monsieur Jules Barbey

Rue Delille, Hotel de Valence, Paris

Cachets: 5 Mars, 1835.

8 Mars, 1835.

and hurts me so cruelly that I direct my suffering cry toward you. This morning, I longed avidly for death. Alas! If it came, I would perhaps ask its help in taking up my burden again; this is the final aspect of man's misery. So far do I degrade my troubles by weakness, that I am almost to blame for my suffering. You can never know—you!—what passes in this tomb of dejection where my soul is shrouded; there it is eaten away, but in a worse manner than a body in a grave, I assure you. Thus will be all my life. Have you seen fruit, fallen from a tree, gnawed away by myriads of ants and carried off morsel by morsel to their home? I am such a fallen fruit. Against suffering, I am helpless as an infant. Only when with you do I feel any reprieve from life and men. If you but knew how miserable is my life!

Adieu until Sunday, when I see you.

Mce

M. Jules Barbey,

Rue Delille, Hotel de Valence, Paris.

Postmarked: March 5, 1835.

March 8, 1835.

Letter No. 4

Mercredi, 15 (Juillet 1835)

Croiriez-vous que ce malheureux Dupont n'a pas encore lu et qu'il m'a prié d'attendre comme dernier terme jusqu'au 23? "Mes yeux sont mauvais je ne puis lire le soir, l'absence de ma femme double mes occupations . . ." A tout cela j'ai répondu que je repasserais certainement le 23, si vous y donnez consentement. N'ayant pas d'instructions sur ce cas, j'ai pris cet avis qui ne décide rien. J'attends votre parti. Si l'affaire se concluait, le traité devrait-il être signé sur le champ? Et s'il devait l'être, ne me faudrait-il pas une procuration de vous?

Je n'étais pas au concert la nuit de votre voyage, je m'étais retiré de bonne heure dans le vide de votre chambre. Je n'eus point part à ces lueurs nocturnes qui me sont devenues bien plus chères depuis que je sais qu'elles nourrissent mon souvenir dans les coeurs amis. Les ombres descendirent rapidement et s'empressèrent autour de ma tristesse. Depuis mes soirs ressemblent tous à celui-là: comme les oiseaux, je disparaissais au crépuscule. Rentré, j'essaie d'écrire: le plus souvent, le souffle qu'il me semblait avoir entendu venir, tourne ailleurs; alors je prends des livres que j'écarte bientôt, car mon imagination trompée rentre dans ses demeures et refuse d'éclairer mes lectures. Inquiet et sans philoso-

Letter No. 4

Wednesday (July 15, 1835)

Can you believe that this wretched Dupont has not yet read (it) and that he asks me to give him a final extension until the 23rd? "My eyes are poor, I cannot read in the evening, the absence of my wife redoubles my work . . ." To all this I replied that I would certainly come again on the 23rd, if you consented. Having no orders in the matter, I took this course, which settles nothing. I await your instructions. If the business is concluded, should the contract be signed on the spot? And in such case, should I not have a power of attorney from you? ¹

I was not at the concert the night of your departure; I retired early in your empty room. I had no share in these nocturnal glimmerings which have become so much dearer to me, since I know that they preserve my memory in friendly hearts. The fast-falling shadows enfolded my melancholy. Since then, my evenings have all resembled that one; like the birds, I vanish at twilight. In my room, I try to write; usually, the whisper of inspiration I seemed to hear hovering, turns elsewhere. Then I pick up books and soon lay them down, for my deceived imagination withdraws into

¹ This is an allusion to Barbey d'Aurevilly's *Germaine, Ou Ce Qui Ne Meurt Pas*. See following letter. Also E. Grelé, *Un Roman de Barbey d'Aurevilly*, Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de la France. 1904.

phie, je me livre à de petites souffrances, j'essuie les caprices de ma tête sujette aux nerfs et si faiblement montée. Il n'y a pas long-temps, voyant mes journées presque entièrement usurpées par des soins au dehors, je me plaignais amèrement; aujourd'hui mes espaces de loisir se sont étendus, je compte plusieurs heures qui sont à moi, tout à moi et voilà comme je les consume; c'était pour les endommager ainsi que je demandais de belles portions de temps. Pourquoi formais-je cette prière? Je savais bien qu'il en arriverait ainsi; c'est une expérience où je suis vieux. Je ne veux plus rien implorer, les dons des Dieux souffrent trop dans mes mains. Si je deviens bucheron et que je perde ma cognée, je ne supplierai pas Jupiter de me la rendre, de peur d'en recevoir une d'or.—Je n'ai eu qu'une joie depuis votre départ, celle de voir se rompre, grâce à un petit effort, des derniers liens de dépendance qui me fâchaient tant. Je n'ai pas écrit, j'ai parlé, sans finesse pourtant, avec cette parole malavisée et boiteuse qui poursuit si gauchement son dessein; mais je m'adressais à une femme assez subtile et assez bonne pour démêler l'objet de mon discours dans ses premiers mots, et aller au devant de mes représentations qui s'avançaient à pas lents et timides. Elle a elle-même et de fort bonne grâce dissout le reste de mes noeuds.

J'ai reçu, dimanche, une visite de Boissières. Je ne

its own domain and refuses to enlighten my reading. Uneasy, without any philosophy, I give myself up to petty sufferings. I am subject to the whims of my head, so weakly organized, so controlled by nerves. Not long since, seeing my days almost entirely usurped by outward cares, I complained bitterly; today my periods of leisure have lengthened. I have hours at a time to myself, all to myself, and this is how I spend them; it was to waste them thus that I asked more liberal portions of time. Why did I send up this petition? I well knew it would happen thus—I am an old hand at this game. I shall beg for nothing more; the gifts of the gods suffer too much between my hands. If I became a wood-cutter and lost my axe, I should not supplicate Jupiter to return it me, for fear of receiving one of gold.

Since your departure I have had but one joy—that of breaking, thanks to a slight effort, the last ties of dependence which so troubled me. I did not write; I spoke—without finesse, however, and with all my ill-advised and limping speech which pursues its aim so awkwardly. But I addressed a woman so kind and of such fine perception that she discerned the object of my speech from the very first words, and forestalled the slow and timid approach of my representations. She herself, and with excellent good grace, set me at liberty.

m'y attendais pas, et me trouver seul ayant à fournir une conversation générale et vague, me déconcertait secrètement. Quel Esprit favorable a gouverné ma langue, je l'ignore, mais j'ai parlé assez aisément et me suis retiré sans trop d'échecs de cette grande aventure. Chose étrange que je souffre dans tous les emplois que je fais de mes facultés, et que je puise la douleur où la plupart trouvent la source des plus vives joies. Si j'excepte de très rares moments mon esprit se meut toujours avec des ressentiments aigus, comme cette pauvre créature dont j'ai lu dans l'histoire naturelle, que chaque pas qu'elle fait lui coûte des angoisses et lui arrache des plaintes.

Je me plais en attendant que je reçoive les feuillets promis à imaginer votre vie. Je vous mets parfois dans les lointains de mon imagination; vous me paraissez au fond de ces perspectives enveloppé de je ne sais quelles scènes d'ombre, de lumière et de nuages, comme les cimes éloignées Mont-Perdu ou Canigou dans les Pyrénées, où j'attachais de si longs regards dans mon enfance. D'autres fois, vous diminuant et vous rapprochant de moi, je vous suis dans les prairies, O Philosophe, quêtant des hépatiques, des iris ou des millepertuis. La vie lointaine d'un ami fait venir tant de rêves! Ce que vous m'avez dit de votre excellente Aimée, me revient aussi avec charme; je la vois à coté

On Sunday I received a visit from Boissières. I was not expecting it, and being alone had to supply a general and rather vague conversation, which secretly disconcerted me. What kindly spirit ruled my tongue, I know not, but I spoke rather at my ease, and drew myself out of this great adventure without too much mishap. A strange thing—I suffer in making any use of my faculties, and where most people discover the wellspring of keenest joy, I extract only pain. Except for very rare moments, my mind always moves in bitter pains, like that poor creature of which I have read in natural history—each step it takes costs it agony and wrings from it pitiful cries.

While awaiting reception of the promised pages, I divert myself by imagining your life. I place you sometimes in the far vistas of my imagination; you appear to me, against the background of these perspectives, enveloped in I know not what scenes of shadow, of light, of mist, like the distant peaks of Mont Perdu or Canigou in the Pyrenees, upon which my eyes so longingly rested in childhood. At other times I see you smaller and closer to me and I follow you into the meadows, O Philosopher, seeking hepaticae, irises, worts. The far-away life of a friend conjures up so many dreams! What you have told me of your excellent Aimée² also

² "Mlle. Aimée le Foulon, who rented me a room during my last years in the law school." Note of Barbey d'Aurevilly. *Memorandum*, October 11, 1836.

de vous qui parle, parle, parle, et ne peut en dire assez. Si l'heure de la poste ne me pressait pas, je vous effleurerais ici quelques traits de votre campagne telle qu'elle s'est ouverte dans mon imagination. Mais, comme à l'heure où les prés ont assez bu il faut que je détourne le cours des ruisseaux.

Je tâcherai d'avoir fini mon travail avant votre retour; je crois pouvoir le promettre en prenant l'avis de ma traînante pensée.

Mes amitiés bien vives à votre frère.

Votre

G.G.

Vous avez déjà reçu, sans doute, le paquet de Trébutien, c'est pourquoi je n'en parlais pas.

Monsieur Jules Barbey

Place Malherbe No. 2.

à Caen.

Cachets: 15 juil. 1835.

16 juil. 1835.

comes back to me with new charm; I see her beside you as she talks, talks, talks, and still can never talk enough. Were I not pressed by the closing of the mail, I would here touch upon some aspects of your countryside as it is disclosed by my imagination; but, as when the fields have been sufficiently watered, I must turn aside the course of the stream.

I shall try to have my work finished before your return; after consulting my straggling thoughts, I think I may promise it. My warmest regards to your brother.

Your

G.G.³

You have doubtless already received the package from Trébutien; that is why I do not mention it.

M. Jules Barbey,
Place Malherbe No. 2, Caen.
Postmarked: July 15, 1835.
July 16, 1835.

³ This unusual initial "G" explains a fact which has puzzled the biographers of Maurice de Guérin. In her famous article in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, George Sand called him "George" instead of "Maurice," and the same first name is used by Barbey in letters to Eugénie. Georges was one of the given names of Maurice de Guérin, and he may have used it with Barbey.

Letter No. 5

Lundi, 20 (Juillet, 1835)

Une heure après avoir reçu votre lettre, je ramenaï *Germaine* délivrée. En quelles mains elle était tombée! Cet homme édite Ango. Comme je lui parlais des propositions qui vous sont venues, "Je serais désespéré", s'est-il écrié, "de faire manquer ces offres: M. Barbey est très aimable. J'aurais bien voulu conclure avec lui, on voit qu'il a beaucoup réfléchi, c'est de la philosophie que son livre; mais j'aurais [voulu] causé avec lui sur quelques points. Au demeurant son écriture est très difficile, elle me *papillotte* dans les yeux. S'il veut accorder encore huit jours," etc., etc., etc. J'ai tranché net, car je souffrais. Pardonnez-moi de vous rapporter de telles phrases: c'est pour vous donner une idée de ce dénouement. J'ai vu hier Trébutien qui ne m'a rien dit de nouveau du côté de Levavasseur. Réjouissez vous de voir *Germaine* sortie des mains profanes [d'un pareil dépositaire]. Que la destinée du beau est triste dans ce monde.

M. Gaudin est arrivé samedi. Il est ici ou à la campagne dans les environs, tout au plus pour un mois. Je recommence à vivre un peu depuis son retour. La semaine s'était passée bien mauvaise et la souffrance qui reste, m'interrompt encore tandis que je vous écris. Vous le voyez, je vous jette des phrases

Letter No. 5

Monday, 20 (July, 1835)

An hour after having received your letter, I fetched *Germaine* home, liberated. Into what hands she had fallen! This man publishes *Ango*. As I spoke with him of the proposals sent you: "I would be in despair if I made him lose these offers," he cried. "M. Barbey is very amiable, and I had hoped to sign with him; one can see that he is a deep thinker—his book is a veritable philosophy! But I should like to talk over certain points with him. Besides, his writing is extremely hard to read—it flutters before my eyes! If he can give me another eight days," etc., etc., etc. I cut him short, for I was suffering. Pardon my repeating such words—it is merely to give you an idea of the outcome. Yesterday I saw Trébutien, who had no news as regards Levavasseur. You may well rejoice at seeing *Germaine* out of such profane hands. How sad is the fate of the beautiful, in this world!

M. Gaudin arrived Saturday. He is here, or in the country outside town, for a month at most. Since his return I have begun to live anew. The week passed very badly, and the suffering which remains, again interrupts me while I am writing you. You see, I fling you curt and lifeless phrases, like a man who draws breath with short gasps. My happiness hangs upon the

coupées et sans ressort comme un homme qui tire son haleine à courtes reprises. Mon bonheur tient aux fils les plus déliés, aussi les rompt-il si souvent que la fatigue me prend de renouer [et que], je m'en vais au loin quelque fois tirant vers les cotés les plus âpres et les plus glacés. J'ai reçu une lettre de ma soeur, telle à peu près que je devais l'attendre, mais qui n'a pas laissé pour cela de me troubler dans mon séjour et de me chasser aussi sur ces tristes latitudes. Ma soeur me fait des plaintes fort vives, elle m'accuse, elle m'accable, elle se lasse, s'assied et se livre à toute la tristesse. Je crois que mon développement l'a trompée, elle m'attendait tout autre; elle voudrait m'obtenir tel qu'elle imaginait que je serais. On me demande des conformités qui ne sont pas en mon pouvoir, des expansions que j'accorderai par égard et jamais par nature, et des expressions d'une tendresse résidant dans ma raison et sans doute aussi dans mon coeur, mais non pas sensiblement et à précipiter les pulsations. Serais-je entendu si je m'exposais en cette manière? Ceux qui aiment avec le coeur peuvent-ils se rendre à la vérité d'une affection rationnelle? Je dois des réparations immenses à ma soeur: je l'ai fait beaucoup souffrir et aujourd'hui plus que jamais. Mais je l'aime bien, ce me semble autant que je puis donner de vie en moi aux affections. Qui pourrais-je avoir en plus grande

slenderest threads; they break so frequently that I am too weary to knot them up. Sometimes I go afar off, into the harshest and most frigid places.

I have received a letter from my sister, more or less what I anticipated, but which has none the less troubled me in my sojourn and helped to drive me into these sad latitudes. My sister complains of me strongly, accuses me; she condemns me, then in discouragement sits down and gives up to utter sadness. I think she is disappointed in my development. She expected that I would be entirely different, and would like to fashion me over into what she imagined I should become. I am asked for conformities beyond my abilities, for outpourings which I shall grant out of consideration, but never spontaneously, and for expression of a tenderness which dwells in my brain and doubtless also in my heart, but there latently, without power to quicken its pulsations.

Would I be understood if I laid myself bare in this fashion? Can those who love with their heart understand a rational affection? I owe my sister enormous reparations; I have made her suffer much, and today more than ever. Yet I love her indeed, as much, it seems, as I can bring any affection to life within me. Whom could I hold in deeper love? And she says: "Why do you cast aside my prayers, my complaints,

amitié? Et elle me dit: "Pourquoi délaisses-tu mes prières, mes plaintes, toute mon affection? Tu ne veux plus de moi, voilà tout." Je lui livrerais bien cent mille de mes tristes secrets, mais oserais-je lui avouer, comme à vous, que j'ai dans mon âme des caprices d'une cruauté bien grande et qui dans un prince enfant feraient redouter une odieuse manière de tyrannie future. Je me souviens fort distinctement que dans un âge fort tendre je goûtais un plaisir amer à battre les animaux que j'aimais. Leurs cris me procuraient un déchirement de coeur, je ne sais quelle volupté de pitié dont j'étais avide. Si j'étais empereur romain je ferais peut-être donner la question à mes amis pour le plaisir de les plaindre. Je me dirais: ils m'aiment, ils croyaient que je les aimais, de quel étonnement plus douloureux que les tortures doit les frapper mon courroux sans motifs, et les réflexions m'affecteraient profondément, et j'en tirerais une souffrance de coeur dont je m'assouvirais. Voilà la plus claire analyse que je puisse vous donner de cet horrible travers. Si je l'adressais (*sic*) à ma soeur, elle lui expliquerait bien des points mystérieux de la conduite de mon affection pour elle. Elle saurait que je la fais souffrir parce que je l'aime beaucoup. Vous me croirez fou. Croyez moi ce que vous voudrez. Je vous dis la vérité, vous qui savez la nature humaine, pourrez-vous hésiter à le croire? Je me con-

all my love? You are through with me, that is all!" I would gladly impart to her a hundred thousand of my sad secrets—but would I dare confess to her, as I do to you, that in my soul is the caprice of great cruelty, which in a child-prince would foretell a shameful form of future tyranny?

I remember most distinctly how, at an early age, I found a sweet pleasure in beating the animals I loved; their cries brought me a rending of the heart, a nameless voluptuousness of pity which I craved. Were I a Roman emperor, I would perhaps set my friends on the rack for the pleasure of pitying them. I would tell myself: "They love me, they believed I loved them; with what astonishment more grievous than the torture itself, must my motiveless rage strike them!" These reflections would affect me deeply and I would derive from them a heartrending pain on which I would gorge. There is the clearest analysis I can give you of this horrible eccentricity.

Did I address this to my sister, she would find in it the explanation for many mysterious things in the course of my affection for her. She would learn that I make her suffer because I love her greatly. You will believe me insane—believe what you like. I tell you the truth, you who know human nature; can you hesitate to believe it? I confess to you as man to man,

fesse à vous comme le sait faire l'homme à l'homme,
la nature faible à la nature forte, l'âme troublée et
valétudinaire à l'intelligence sereine et haute.

Adieu

G.G.

Monsieur Jules Barbey

Place Malherbe 2

a Caen.

Cachets: 20 juillet, 1835.

Caen 21 juillet.

THE LETTERS

weak nature to strong nature, troubled and vacillating
spirit to serene and lofty intelligence!

Adieu,

G.G.

M. Jules Barbey,

Place Malherbe, 2, Caen.

Postmarked: July 20, 1835.

Caen, July 21.

Letter No. 6

(The following letter is fragmentary, but of such curious interest that its reconstruction in translation has been attempted —without apologies.)

8 Xbre

ne feuille qui va vous coûter une bien
mais en vous écrivant, mon ami, je suis
charme si entraînant et si fidèle qu'au
ngues haleines d'écriture je retrouve en moi
nées lorsqu'elles se disputent les premières lignes.
du début et cette douce confusion qui se
—je aujourd'hui un surcroit de carrière. Si vous
moins de germes dans mon esprit, si votre nom
talisman dont je me sers pour faire revenir
pensées, si enfin je ne savais pas qu'il y a
chaine et que vous avez fourni presque tout
nose, l'action de vous écrire ne serait pas la
que je ménage sur le temps, et je craindrais
ce moment, d'entrer en un tel champ de
sur la durée que prennent vos absences, je ne
époques, tous les jours marqués par la venue de
dont quelques heures sauvées vont se résoudre
asion de vous parler. Vous êtes tel en moi
seul je m'attache à tirer de la confusion de
es pensées ou des ombres de pensées, dont je ne peux
arrêter les formes et qui, leur destin achevé après

*Letter No. 6*¹

Dec. 8, 1836.

Here is a page which will cost you a goodly hour; but in writing you, my friend, I am held by a charm so enduring and captivating that at the end of a long-winded epistle I find myself no less eager than at the beginning, and my thoughts are in the same sweet confusion as when they dispute for the opening lines.

Today I have an embarrassment of topics. Did you implant fewer seeds within my spirit, were not your name a talisman which I use to summon up my ideas—in a word, did I not know there is a bond between us and that you have furnished nearly all my inspiration, then the act of writing you were not the same. I would save my time, and would at this moment hesitate ere entering such a field of discussion.

In your absence each day awaits the coming of night, when a few salvaged hours give occasion for speech with you. So deeply are you rooted in me, that through you alone can I extricate some coherent ideas from the confusion of my thoughts, or thought-shadows, whose substance I cannot define; and which, having achieved their destiny in the letters sent you, again withdraw—doubtless into infinity.

¹ According to Mr. Abel Lefranc, the woman called Cecilia Metella by Barbey d'Aurevilly and often mentioned in his *Memorandum* would probably be the heroine of the prose poem *Amaïdée* in which Guérin appears under the name of Somegod.

devant vous, se retireront sans doute dans

tristesse dans vos pensées sur le mariage: eh quoi engager dans le hazard de cette aventure? Sans ai que l'état entier de notre vie suit nos affections et leur fortune. Mais les affections, si rares qui vont s'unir à la destinée paisible rencontrer le calme et s'amasser enfin tranquille elles-mêmes? La plupart de ceux qui descendent le coeur plein d'amour, se l'imaginent sans doute, à cette illusion quelques instants de foi naïve au qui ne conçois pas les affections séparées de la souffrance

Sa mariant on ne jette au sort que sa dignité d'un tel enjeu pour piquer du plus vif intérêt l'et quelle occasion plus ouverte d'engager du et hardies avec cet adversaire mystérieux que n le hazard? Mais dès lors, si vous aimiez de pure mariage, loin de mêler cette intimité dont l'espoir l'interdit, et altère mortellement votre amour en des intérêts d'amour propre. Le mariage est un rôle avec les merveilleuses théories de l'art, nous enseigne que

grands comédiens garde le calme dans l'action et ne de la mesure de ses mouvements qu'une montre. Je penche à croire, mon ami, (m'en voudriez vous

I perceive a melancholy in your observations on marriage—come, then! Why seek to engage me in the hazards of such an adventure? I know our entire condition of life doubtless follows our affections and their fate; but the affections, those delicate sensations which seek only a peaceful existence—do they not find quietude and in the end garner tranquillity, within themselves? Most of those who stoop to marriage, doubtless thinking their hearts full of love, pause some moments to regard this illusion with a naive faith in happiness. Not I, who cannot conceive of the affections except as united with sufferings!

Marrying, one stakes only dignity; such a wager suffices to spur the soul with vivid eagerness. And where is more favorable chance of meeting stoutly and boldly this mysterious adversary who does not shrink from the hazard? But afterward, if you love with a pure flame, marriage is far from bringing about this intimacy depicted by hope; prohibits it, rather, and mortally offends your love in serving the cause of self-respect. Marriage is a rôle, investing us with all the marvellous theories of the dramatic art. It teaches us that a great comedian remains calm in action and does not alter the measure of his gestures except for a calculated effect.

I lean to the belief, my friend—you know I would

de tous nos rêves les plus ironiques sont ceux de notre mariage ne peut rassembler amour et dignité et que l'amour si souvent accusé, mais toujours jugé par de nos songes, nous prend comme des oisillons au L'infini peut-il être l'attribut d'une passion qui pas nous fait trébucher dans le mariage? Voyez qui engagent dans la fente d'un vieux mur de leurs entretiens, voilà tout le bonheur que l donne (je ne parle pas des convulsions) lettre; charmante interruption et qui sauve core de bon sens à compromettre dans mon discours velléités de mariage. Ce bel essai de dispute sur suis plein d'ignorance, doit éclater d'une fort nance pour un connaisseur tel que vous. Moi parler traiter de cette métaphysique si compliquée, si à moins des fruits les plus délicats de l'expérience par un esprit des plus déliés, on ne fait qu'y ent. Moi séparé des femmes par quelque chose interpréter ces ombres lointaines. Et d'où me vient j'ai vu les traits que vous donnez de votre belle vez doublé ma confusion. Tout ce qu'emporte la nature anti et les ombres dont elle se relève, leurs graces la pauvreté de leur être et son étendue, les secrets de quel est le vin contenu dans ces vases que nous à tout cela je n'ai vu d'expression que dans votre loie des ressources inconnues et jette un souffle

say this—that the most ironic of all our dreams are those of happiness; that marriage cannot join love and dignity; and that this Love, so often accused yet ever judged by the testimony of our dreams, captures us like little birds in the snare. Can we attribute infinity to a passion which at each step trips us into marriage? Look at those who slink in the shadow of some old wall, drunk with their embraces—there is all the happiness of marriage! (I do not mention the convulsions.)

I have just received your letter—a charming interruption, whose sound sense saves me from further committing myself in my discourse on the follies of marriage. This fine attempt at argument upon a topic of which I am entirely ignorant, must burst upon such a connoisseur as yourself in its full ridiculousness. I, to sermonize and discuss these complicated metaphysics, so dependent upon all the most delicate fruits of experience, so far beyond the most acute intelligence—what mockery! I, separated from women by something eternal, to dare interpret these distant shadows!

Yet whence comes my audacity? I have seen the sketches drawn from your fine experience, and my confusion is doubled. All that the nature of a woman means, all these shadows with which she is invested—

l'ivresse et la raillerie; —Je vous ai trouvé un d'une fort belle impression mais pas annoté. Voulez celui-là (cela se peut) pour en chercher un qui ait des et le monde et tous mes rêves de salons, comment pédantesques travaux. J'ai tiré le rideau sur cette -vous que n'ayant ni coeur ni main pour les donner quelques regrets à cet ajournement indéfini de sur les parquets, qui sont du plancher, ou sur les ments hélas je ne sais rien jouer. La nature à en âtir sérieusement sur un petit plan. Je me rabattra cet hiver, sur le monde assis ou tournant autour des mélodies de Musard qui nous ouvre ses merveilles a On fait des contes mirifiques du palais de ce nouv vos insidieuses questions sur la petite Péri. Sur mon souffle pour peu que je voulusse approcher je reviens à croire que je suis une espèce de Caliban les *Miranda* du monde.—Un rhume qui m' jours au lit, et à pure perte; l'avez-vous admiré rhume, dis-je me fait passer à grands pas sur le bou fois, cependant, je me suis arrêté pour Cecilia toujours satellite; les joues chargées de rouge, mais gardant la et qui prétend que vous réparez les dommages du jeu seul homme de nous verser le café, a rompu avec était devenu jaloux de sa popularité—faut-il vous

the external graces, the poverty and shallowness of spirit, the secrets of beauty and appeal, the kind of wine contained in these vases which so draw us—I have visualized all this only in your display of resources unknown to me, and I cast glances of envy upon this drunkenness and gaiety.

(The remainder of this letter is topical, and cannot well be reconstructed.)

M. Jules Barbey,

St. Sauveur-le-Vicomte, Manche.

Postmarked: Paris, Dec. 9, 1836.

St. Sauveur, Dec. 11.

nom et à votre adresse ordinaire à Caen?

Tout vo

Monsieur Jules Barbey

A St Sauveur-le-Vicomte

Manche

Cachets: Paris 9 Dec. 1836 F.

St Sauveur 11 Dec.

Letter No. 7

Mercredy, 26

Madame,

Un vomissement de sang assez considérable m'empêche d'avoir l'honneur de vous voir aujourd'hui. Le pire de mon mal, c'est mon regret. Une saignée que je viens de subir—m'empêche aussi de vous tracer moi même l'expression de la contrariété que j'éprouve en pensant à la différence de ma soirée. Ce sera penser à vous tout de même, mais j'aimerais mieux y penser à côté de vous.

Agréez, Madame, l'assurance de mon respectueux attachement.

MAURICE DE GUÉRIN

*Madame la baronne de Maistre,
Rue Jacob, Hôtel de Hambourg.
Cachet: 1837.*

Letter No. 7

Wednesday, 26

Madame:

A rather heavy vomiting of blood keeps me from having the honor of seeing you today. The worst of my illness is my regret. I have just been bled, and this also prevents me from writing you myself and expressing my disappointment at thinking of how different my evening must be. I shall think of you all the same, but should prefer to do so when at your side.

Receive, Madame, the assurance of my respectful attachment.

MAURICE DE GUÉRIN ¹

*Mme. la Baronne de Maistre,
Rue Jacob, Hotel de Hambourg.
Postmarked: Paris, 1837.*

¹ Signed by Maurice; written on notepaper of Barbey d'Aurevilly and probably in his hand.

Letter No. 8

Du Cayla 20 (Juillet 1837)

Madame,

Me voici dans ma petite chambre du Cayla, isolée et tranquille à souhait, d'où je n'entends d'autre bruit que le chant des cigales cachées dans les arbres voisins. Autour de moi, c'est tout au plus si quelque moucheron solitaire tourbillonne en bourdonnant. Vous vous rappellerez en souriant le charme singulier que j'attache à ce bruit qui paraît plutôt importun; mais gardez vous d'en induire que je n'ai d'autre sujet de rêverie dans ma solitude que les ailes des mouchérons. C'est hier que j'ai terminé cinq ans d'absence dans les bras de ma famille. Suis-je abusé par mes yeux, par mes souvenirs ou bien le temps a-t-il usé d'une clémence qu'on ne lui trouve guère? Je ne sais, mais je n'ai remarqué dans les traits de mes soeurs presque aucun signe de son passage. Parmi les vives jouissances de coeur au moment où l'on se retrouve après un si long temps d'éloignement, y en a-t-il de plus pénétrante que de reconnaître que l'absence n'a rien changé? Mon voyage sur le Rhône a rempli à peu près les pressentiments de mon imagination. Les plus beaux accidents et les plus variés font cortège au cours de ce fleuve. Signaler tous les ordres de paysages rangés sur ses rives

Letter No. 8

Cayla, 20 (July, 1837)

Madame:

Here I am in my little room at Cayla, isolated and tranquil as I could wish, where I hear no sound save the song of the cicadas hidden in the nearby trees; it is as though a solitary gnat, at most, buzzed in whirling around me. You will remember, smilingly, the singular charm I find in this sound, which appears rather importunate, but do not deduce from this that I have no other subject of reverie in my solitude than the wings of gnats!

Yesterday I ended five years of absence in the arms of my family. Am I deceived by my eyes, by my memory, or has time exerted a clemency which is rarely found? I do not know; but in the features of my sisters I find almost no trace of its passing. Among the vivid heart's delights in the moment of return after such long absence, is there any more acute than the realization that time has altered nothing?

My trip on the Rhone more or less fulfilled all the expectations of my imagination. The length of this river is a succession of the most beautiful and varied aspects. To note down all the sorts of landscape encountered along its banks were too arduous a labor; I would describe the extremes, were not . . . (torn).

serait une entreprise trop étendue, je vous marquerai les extrêmes, n'était le fil toujours . . . (dechirure).

On vante les châteaux des bords du Rhin; que ne parle-t-on des villes des bords du Rhône? Il n'y en a pas qui n'y occupe un site heureux ou étrange et qui n'y présente les plus beaux débris du moyen-âge. Vienne, découverte à travers les vapeurs du matin, m'a paru comme en rêve. Est-ce Vienne ou Valence qu'habite Mlle. Sophie de Rivides? Ma méchante mémoire m'a tenu incertain entre des deux villes; mais nous n'avons pris terre ni dans l'une ni dans l'autre. Avignon est encore enfermée dans ses antiques murailles. Le palais des Papes y forme les plus belles ruines et l'on ne sait s'il faut rêver ou penser devant le spectacle qu'elles donnent. Plus bas Tarascon dont le vieux château correspond aux vieilles tours de Beaucaire, communique avec cette ville par un pont en fil de fer, merveille d'élégance. De loin c'est comme une toile d'araignée. Le Rhone s'applaudit, je m'imag-ine, de porter un joug si beau et si léger. C'est ici le terme de ma navigation. Voilà soixante-deux lieues parcourues entre quatre heures du matin et cinq heures du soir; rapide conteur de ce prompt passage, mon récit ne fait que passer comme notre bateau, devant mille souvenirs, et combien qui m'échappent sans doute. Mais toutes les fois qu'on écrit ne faut-il pas se

The castles beside the Rhine are praised afar; why not vaunt the towns along the Rhone? None of them but occupies a beautiful or picturesque site, presenting the most beautiful ruins of the Middle Ages. Vienne, seen through the mists of morning, appeared to me as in a dream. Is it in Vienne or Valence that Mlle. Sophie de Rivides lives? My wretched memory held me hesitant between the two places, but we landed at neither. Avignon is still encircled by its ancient walls; the palace of the Popes there is a magnificent ruin—one does not know whether to fall into thought or into reverie before the spectacle. Farther on, Tarascon, whose old château stands over against the ancient towers of Beaucaire, and communicates with the latter town by a suspension bridge, a marvel of elegance. From afar it is like a spider's web. The Rhone is gladdened, I imagine, to bear so beautiful and light a yoke.

Here was the end of my navigation—seventy-two leagues covered between four in the morning and five in the afternoon. Rapidly sketching this swift journey, my account passes like our boat before a thousand recollections—and much which doubtless escaped me. But whenever writing, one must be resigned to the omission of the very things one most desired to set down. Banal details swarming beneath the pen, banish as in jealousy those which would hold more charm.

résigner à manquer de dire ce que l'on tenait le plus à exprimer. Les détails sans intérêt fourmillent sous la plume et bannissent comme par jalousie ceux qui auraient eu quelque charme. Le sujet est grand, les paroles sont petites. J'oserais à peine vous envoyer mon récit, madame, si je ne me reposais sur votre imagination pour relever l'indigence de mes lettres et colorer les pâleurs de mes expressions. Ne craignez pas d'imaginer en allant par la pensée mille fois au delà de mes tableaux. Pourquoi les pensées qui sont la lumière de l'âme, ne peuvent-elles se communiquer à travers l'espace comme la lumière du soleil? Pour dire: j'ai vu ceci, j'ai vu cela et donner quelque relief à ce que l'on a vu, on n'a jamais que des expressions imparfaites—qu'il est triste de rester à cent lieues loin de ce que l'on voudrait dire.—Je me séparerai sans aucun regret de mes compagnons de voyage qui étaient des marchands avec leurs marchandises, quelques artistes et quelques Anglais, éternels visiteurs de cette pauvre Italie—tous membre d'une majorité toujours compacte depuis Adam. Je traversai rapidement la foire célèbre. Je m'attendais à une grande foule, point de grande foule; à des visages Italiens, Espagnols, Grecs, Levantins, rien de tout cela. C'est une vulgaire cohue. Le bas peuple seul est remarquable et je parle ici de toutes les villes de cette partie du midi. C'est une race

The subject is great, and words are small. I would scarcely dare to send you my account, Madame, did I not rely on your imagination to relieve the poverty of my words and heighten the poor color of my phrases. Do not spare imagination, but go in thought a thousand times beyond that of my pictures! Why cannot thoughts, which are the light of the soul, communicate across space like the sunlight? We say "I have seen this" or "I have seen that," but to depict in some relief what one has seen, there are to hand only imperfect expressions. How sad to remain a hundred leagues away from what one would like to say!

I separated without regret from my travelling companions; there were merchants with their goods, some artists, and some English people, the eternal visitors of poor Italy, all members of a majority compact ever since Adam. I went through the celebrated fair rapidly. I expected a huge crowd, but there was no huge crowd; I expected Italian faces, Spanish, Greek, Levantine—but found none of these. It was a vulgar mob. Down there the common folk alone are remarkable, and I mean this of all the towns in this part of the Midi. It is a race half African in its vehemence and its rapacious instincts. Strong detachments of troops of the line could scarcely restrain above four hundred tattered rascals ready to fling themselves on the boat

demi-africaine par sa violence et ses instincts de rapacité. De forts détachements de troupes de ligne eurent grand' peine à contenir plus de quatre cent déguenillés prêts à s'élancer sur le bateau pour enlever nos paquets et nous rançonner. A minuit je m'endormais à Nîmes. Ce papier tire à sa fin et il me reste encore mainte ville à traverser, mainte rivière et une chaîne de montagnes. Est-ce une présomption de croire que cette relation a mérité assez votre intérêt pour valoir qu'on l'achève dans une autre lettre? Si j'ai été assez heureux pour que vous en réclamiez la suite, je mènerai cet itinéraire jusqu'à la porte du Cayla et si ce sujet vous touche, le manoir, son paysage, le pays et tout ce qui le signale seront mis sous vos yeux. Je décris à ma famille les Coques et St. Martin. Ce n'est pas non plus l'affaire d'un jour que cette description et malheureusement je ne suis pas assez bon peintre d'intérieur pour donner une juste idée du charme de celui ci (déchirure). . . .

. . . quelques vous disant qu'ils ne m'auraient pas reconnu; aucun ne m'a trouvé l'air déchu et par trop maigre. Il est vrai que le soleil du Midi qui m'a frappé au visage cinq ou six jours durant, m'a bronzé et revêtu d'apparence de santé assez bien. Je suis au reste dans mon état habituel, mais un peu aigri par la poussière des grandes routes. Je vais exécuter religieuse-

to carry off our luggage and hold it to ransom. At midnight I slept at Nîmes.

This page draws toward its end, and there still remain to me many a town to cross, many a river, and a chain of mountains. Is it presumption to think that this account has sufficiently deserved your interest to be worth finishing in another letter? Were I happy enough to have you demand the end, I should bring this itinerary to the gate of Cayla; and did the subject interest you, the manor and landscape, the countryside and all that distinguishes it, would be brought before your eyes!

I describe Les Coques and St. Martin to my family. Such description is not the matter of a day, and unluckily I am not good enough at describing interiors to give any just idea of the charms of that one . . . (torn).

. . . some will tell you that they have not recognized me; no one found me emaciated or too thin. True, the sun of the Midi was full on my face for five or six days, and has bronzed and lent me an aspect of rather good health. For the rest, I am in my usual condition, but somewhat irritated by the dust of the highways. I shall religiously execute my promise to obey the counsels given me with such kindness.

ment ma promesse d'obéir aux conseils qui m'ont été donnés avec tant de bonté.

J'aime à penser que vous avez reçu d'excellentes nouvelles de Mme. de Ste. Marie et de St. Martin.

Veuillez, Madame, me rappeler au bon souvenir de M. de Maistre et me ranger au nombre de vos serviteurs les plus dévoués.

Mademoiselle Valentine souffrira-t-elle que je joigne un baiser à mon souvenir.

M. DU CAYLA

*Madame la Baronne de Maistre
au château des Coques par la Charité
Nièvre.*

Cachets: 26 Juillet 1837.

La Charité, 4 août.

I love to think that you have received excellent news from Mme. de Sainte-Marie and St. Martin.

Pray, Madame, recall me to the kind memory of M. de Maistre, and count me among the number of your most devoted servants. Will Mlle. Valentine allow me to add a kiss to my remembrance?

M. DU CAYLA

*Mme. la Baronne de Maistre
Château des Coques, via La Charité
Nièvre.*

Postmarked: July 26, 1837.

La Charité, Aug. 4.

Letter No. 9

Au Cayla, 6 août (1837)

Madame,

Voici une heure où le Cayla, peu bruyant d'habitude, perd le petit mouvement qui trahit en lui quelque vie et devient le palais du silence. Tout le monde est à la messe à *Andillac*, notre paroisse, à une demi lieue d'ici. Moi seul, par le privilège de ma santé, je suis exempté de la pieuse fatigue et je puis régner, du moins pendant quelques heures sur un empire muet. Voilà sans doute une royauté qui me va, mais voyez comme chacun est tiré hors de son caractère. Ce temps où mon amour du silence pourrait se contenter à souhait, je le consacre à la causerie, sans autre bruit, il est vrai, que le bruissement léger de la plume courant sur le papier, et je suis le premier, moi, le roi du silencieux, à offenser la loi de mon empire; et même, il faut que je le confesse, ce n'est pas la première fois que je pêche contre elles, puisqu'il m'est arrivé dans ma vie d'exciter même des femmes à les enfreindre—les accusant de mutisme et les raillant sur cette humeur—. Je serais bien le plus ingrat de la terre si je ne joignais mes doléances aux vôtres sur la mort de cette pauvre *Blanche* digne vraiment de l'âge d'or par les ruisseaux de lait qu'elle faisait couler. Si l'oraison funèbre que vous avez prononcée sur elle était moins belle et moins

Letter No. 9

Cayla, August 6, 1837

Madame:

This is the hour when Cayla, usually quiet enough, loses the least sound of life and becomes the palace of silence. Everyone is at mass at our parish of Andillac, a half-league away. Privileged by my health, I alone am exempt from the pious exertion, and for a few hours at least I can reign over a silent empire. This, doubtless, is a royalty which suits me; but see how contrary we all are! These hours, when my love of silence might find its heart's desire, are consecrated to a talk—without other sound, it is true, than the light scratching of the pen on the paper; and I, the king of silence, am first to break the laws of my own empire. Nor, I must confess, is this the first time that I sin against them, since in the course of my life I have even incited women to infringe them—accusing them of being dumb and rallying them on this mood.

I should certainly be the most ungrateful creature on earth did I not add my grief to yours on the death of poor Blanche—indeed worthy of the golden age by the streams of milk she produced! Were your funeral oration upon her less beautiful and complete, it had been my place to add certain elegies drawn from my gratitude. Sterne bounded his state of happiness

complète, c'eût été à moi d'y joindre quelques traits puisés dans ma reconnaissance. Sterne bornait les conditions de son bonheur à ces trois points—une chemise, une jatte de lait et la paix. Je ne m'arrête pas à discuter cette idéale simplicité de bonheur et s'il n'y manquerait pas quelque chose; le bonheur est d'une nature mystérieuse et aussi trop capricieuse pour qu'on puisse l'analyser avec sûreté; quelquefois il arrive qu'on n'a jamais été si malheureux que depuis que l'on est heureux, du moins il est certain qu'il existe des peines dans le bonheur même, mais alors il faut se garder de l'égoïsme de la douleur et ne pas vouloir quand le bonheur est solitaire que toutes les peines demeurent pour soi. Mais je reviens à la jatte de lait. Vraiment, je suis assez, quant à cette jatte, de l'avis de votre aimable philosophe. Chaque matin j'en trouvais une à mon réveil à coté de mon lit, tiède et écumante jusqu'aux bords. Comment ouvrir sa journée de façon plus douce et plus sage qu'en répandant en soi ce breuvage dont la vue seule fait naître des pensées de calme et de douceur? Cite-t-on un homme qui ait commis une action sanglante après avoir vidé une coupe de lait? La sensation du réveil si souvent triste et désolante, qui vous replace au milieu des songes favorables et souhaités au milieu de la réalité qui blesse ou qui trompe, quel remède lui apporterez vous plus efficace

by these three things—a shirt, a bowl of milk, and peace. I shall not stop to discuss the ideal simplicity of this happiness, and whether it would not lack something; happiness is mysterious in its nature, and too capricious to be analyzed with certainty. Sometimes it chances that one has never been so unhappy as since beginning to be happy—at least, it is certain that misery exists in happiness itself; but then, one must hold aloof from the egoism of sorrow and not desire, when happiness is shared, to keep all grief to oneself.

But I return to the bowl of milk. As to this bowl, I truly rather share the opinion of your kindly philosopher. At my wakening each morning I found it beside my bed, warm and foaming to the brim. How can one begin his day in sweeter and wiser fashion than by imbibing this beverage, whose very aspect induces thoughts of calmness and serenity? Can anyone mention a man who has committed a bloody crime after drinking a cup of milk?

The sensation of wakening is so often sad and depressing, dragging one from the midst of gentle and kindly dreams into the midst of a hurtful or deceitful reality! What more efficacious remedy can one have than this fluid which, by the smooth quality of its color and taste, seems to be the natural antidote of bitterness? One's temper is decided in the morning; else

que cette liqueur qui, par la qualité suave de sa couleur et de son gout, paraît comme l'antidote naturel de l'amertume? L'humeur prend son cours dès le matin, car pourquoi dirait-on qu'un homme s'est chaussé à l'envers quand il gâte tout, fait tout à contre-bon sens ou bien heurte tout le monde? Buvez du lait avant même votre première pensée, et votre humeur contractant la vertu de ce breuvage philosophique se montrera conciliante et aimante toute la journée. Vous voyez que la jatte de Sterne peut être démontrée nécessaire au bonheur, et que le charmant rieur n'est pas si fol. Pour moi, j'ai, six semaines de suite, trempé dans le lait mes lèvres à peine ouvertes par le réveil, et je ne compte pas dans ma vie de jours où je me suis trouvé plus ouvert au bonheur, où j'en ai recueilli davantage. Vous avez, Madame, épuisé l'éloge de la pauvre *Blanche*; j'ai dû me rattacher à celui du lait. Croyez ces vérités que j'y enseigne et buvez ce philtre du calme qui rassure et fait tomber les inquiétudes sans en altérer la source qui est dans le coeur. Je donnerais presque à mon breuvage la vertu des eaux du Léthé; mais n'allez pas oublier le médecin. Maintenant, par la vertu de ma baguette, nous allons nous trouver assis sur les gradins de l'amphithéâtre de Nîmes. Les monuments d'Autun ne disent presque rien de la grandeur et de la force romaines; c'est ici, au milieu de ces

why say that a man has put his shoe on the wrong foot when he spoils everything, acts contrary to good sense, rubs everyone the wrong way? Drink milk even before your first thought, and, taking on the virtue of this philosophic beverage, your temper will prove amiable and conciliating all day long.

You see, the bowl of Sterne can be proven necessary to happiness, and the charming jester is not such a fool! As to myself, for six weeks in succession I have dipped my lips, scarce opened by wakening, into milk; and all my life I cannot recollect days when I have been more receptive to happiness, or have enjoyed more of it. You have, Madame, exhausted the praises of poor Blanche—I have had to eulogize milk! Believe these truths I teach, and drink this philtre of quietude which reassures and banishes all worries, without altering their source, which is in the heart. Almost would I endow my beverage with the quality of the water of Lethe—but do not go so far as to forget the doctor!

Now, by virtue of my magic wand, we find ourselves seated on the tiers of seats in the amphitheatre of Nîmes. The ruins at Autun say little of the Roman grandeur and power; it is here, amid these enormous works, that the character of this people is borne in upon the spirit. Some details and some parts of the

constructions énormes, que le caractère de ce peuple envahit l'esprit. Quelques points de l'enceinte et quelques détails ont souffert, mais la masse subsiste dans l'état impérissable qui lui a été donné par ces mains étonnantes d'autrefois. Les voûtes vous effraient par l'énormité des pierres qu'elles suspendent vos têtes (*sic*). La maison carrée est un joli petit et frêle bijou d'architecture grecque, qui n'a pas été cassé je ne sais par quel miracle. Mais laissons là ces descriptions et ces souvenirs pédantesques. Du haut des Arènes on découvre en plein la campagne de Nîmes et, par cette campagne, jugez toutes celles du Bas-Languedoc jusqu'à Béziers et au delà. O poètes menteurs! Une plaine bornée par des coteaux d'un lointain ingrat, et coupée au lieu de vos haies du Nivernais, par de tristes murailles de pierres grises: et partout des oliviers, rien que des oliviers, arbre charmant dans les pastorales, mais si austère et si rude aux yeux que l'imagination ne peut vraiment placer sous son ombrage que le scène d'une agonie. Mais voici encore que mon papier finit avant mon voyage—il s'est fait sans accident, mais j'y ai gagné soit sur le Rhône, soit longeant les étangs qui bordent la Méditerranée, le germe d'une maladie dont j'ai ressenti les premières atteintes il y a huit jours. J'ai eu trois accès de fièvre tierce, heureusement la quinine a coupé la régularité de leur re-

enclosure have suffered, but the mass itself remains in the imperishable condition given it by the astounding hands of antiquity. The arches frighten you by the size of the stones suspended above your head.

The "Maison Carrée" is a pretty, fragile little jewel of Greek architecture, which by some miracle has escaped destruction. But let us here abandon these pedantic memories and descriptions. From the top of the arena one has full view of the fields about Nîmes; and by this country one may judge that of lower Languedoc as far as Béziers and beyond.

O lying poets! A plain bordered by the slopes of an insignificant horizon, and cut up by said walls of grey stones, in place of your hedges of the Nivernais; and everywhere the olive-trees, nothing but olive-trees! A charming tree in pastoral verse, but so austere, so harsh to the eye, that truly the imagination can picture nothing but an agony beneath its shade.

But here again my paper has finished long ere my travels—the trip ended without incident; but, either along the Rhône or in walking beside the pools bordering the Mediterranean, I picked up the germ of an illness whose first attack came upon me eight days ago. I have had three attacks of tertian fever, but luckily quinine has ended the regularity of its return; to-day should bring an attack—but instead of suffering,

tour: aujourd'hui serait le jour de l'accès, je devrais souffrir et je vous écris. Vous voyez que je ne suis pas à plaindre puisqu'au lieu des ardeurs de la fièvre que j'attendais aujourd'hui, j'ai pu goûter ce bonheur. Ce traitement de la nouvelle maladie contrarie un peu celui de l'ancienne, mais j'espère que je pourrai le reprendre bientôt. Ce pêle-mêle de souffrances et de remèdes et le long malaise qui a précédé l'apparition des accès, n'ont pas peu ajouté au poids naturel d'une vie de campagne, isolée et monotone comme la nôtre. Toutes mes distractions consistent dans quelques promenades au petit pas de mon cheval. Mais, dans la pensée que mes sœurs m'entourent de mille soins et qu'on doit se rétablir vite au milieu de tant d'affection je trouve ce qui me console et m'encourage.

Veuillez, Madame, me rappeler au souvenir de Monsieur de Maistre et croire à l'expression de l'attachement respectueux que je mêle à mon hommage.

M. GUÉRIN DU CAYLA

x x

x

*Madame la Baronne de Maistre
au château des Coques par la Charité
Nièvre.*

Cachet: La Charité, 12 août 1837

I am writing you. You see, I have no cause to complain, since I was able to have this happiness instead of the fever-fit which I anticipated. This treatment of the new malady somewhat hinders that of the old, but I hope soon to take it up again. This mixture of sufferings and of remedies, and the long discomfort which preceded the appearance of the attacks, has contributed not a little to the weight of a country life, isolated and monotonous as ours is. My only diversions consist of a few slow rides. But I find consolation and encouragement in the thought that my sisters surround me with a thousand cares, and amid so much affection I must soon recover.

Have the kindness, Madame, to recall me to the remembrance of M. de Maistre, and believe the expression of respectful affection which I send with my homage.

M. GUÉRIN DU CAYLA

x x

x

*Mme. la Baronne de Maistre,
Château des Coques, via La Charité
Nièvre*

Postmarked: Cordus, Aug. 8, 1837.

La Charité Aug. 12, 1837.

Letter No. 10

Au Cayla, 13 août (1837)

Madame,

Les accès ont disparu, grâce à la quinine; je vais bien, très bien. Demain, je reprendrai le traitement de ma poitrine: sangsues, sinapismes, tout ce qui m'a été ordonné et conseillé sera mis en pratique, et je ne doute pas que la vertu des remèdes et la constance des précautions m'ôtent bientôt les dernières traces d'un mal déjà bien affaibli. Je suis plein de confiance, et vous savez que ce sentiment est un puissant auxiliaire pour la guérison de quelque souffrance que ce soit. Je me sens aidé dans ma lutte par des vœux qui portent tant de force et d'encouragement que je puis sans témérité me tenir certain de l'avantage. Il y a de telles époques dans la vie où tout incrédule au succès, tout abattu, tout désemparé que l'on soit, on reprend une vigueur secrète, on se sent réchauffé, enrichi de courage et relevé à la hauteur des obstacles. On jouit bien vivement en soi de cette résurrection des forces morales, mais qu'on est plus heureux encore de la joie qu'elle cause à ceux qui mettent en nous tout leur intérêt et s'abattent et se relèvent avec nous. Il n'y a pas que je sache, de plus douce satisfaction que celle de relever par l'expression de la confiance et de la fermeté les amis qui ont attaché leur destinée à la nôtre.

Letter No. 10

Cayla, Aug. 13 (1837)

Madame:

The attacks have vanished, thanks to the quinine; I feel well, very well. Tomorrow I resume my chest treatments; leeches, mustard plasters, everything prescribed and advised for me will be put into play, and I have no doubt that the quality of these remedies and constant precautions will soon banish the last traces of an illness already half conquered. I am full of confidence, and you know that this feeling is a powerful aid in the cure of any illness. I feel myself helped in my struggle by good wishes which bring so much strength and encouragement, that without rashness I may proclaim myself certain of the victory.

There are times in one's life when, hopeless of success, depressed, despairing though one be, a secret energy arises, one feels reanimated, renewed in courage, upraised to cope with all obstacles. We rejoice keenly in this resurrection of the moral faculties, but how much happier are we in the joy it brings to those who take such great interest in us, and who are depressed or encouraged with us! I know of no sweeter satisfaction than this of heartening the friends who have united their destiny with ours, by the expression of confidence and resolution. Next to doubling our af-

Après le redoublement de l'affection, c'est le dédommagement le plus sur qu'on puisse leur donner pour tout ce qu'ils ont souffert à cause de nous; et soi-même, comment se consoler d'avoir occasionné tant de douleur sinon en répandant autant d'espérance et de joie qu'on a causé d'alarmes.—Par son exposition et sa tranquillité le Cayla est très favorable pour un malade. Malheureusement, la paix d'une habitation n'emporte pas toujours celle de ceux qui l'occupent, et les inquiétudes s'enveloppent assez souvent de silence. Aussi se faut-il bien garder d'appliquer aux habitants l'épithète qui convient à la demeure, et de croire d'un homme qu'il est exempt de trouble parce qu'il est possesseur d'un lieu tranquille à souhait. Mon père a lutté toute sa vie contre les mauvais tours de la fortune; le voilà bien près de la vieillesse et loin encore de la paix qui devrait être attachée à cet âge. De tous ses enfants je suis celui dont l'avenir l'inquiète le plus. Je ne partage pas ses craintes et m'efforce de la rassurer; mais il est un certain âge impénétrable à cette vive chaleur de courage et d'espérance qui remplit et soutient la jeunesse. Mon père persiste dans ses défiances de ma fortune, je ne démords pas de ma confiance en mon étoile et ces deux opiniâtres se heurtent parfois dans nos conversations. Avec des caractères dont aucun point ne se touche, mes soeurs sont liées de l'amitié la

fection for them, it is the greatest repayment we can make for all they have endured in our behalf; and as regards myself, how can I be consoled for having caused so much sorrow, except by compensating these alarms with as much hope and joy?

Cayla, by its situation and tranquillity, is most favorable to a patient. Unhappily, the peace of a house does not always extend to those who occupy it, and worries are often veiled in silence. So the adjectives applied to a house cannot apply to those living in it, and a man cannot be credited with exemption from trouble merely because he possesses a spot that is supremely peaceful.

My father has all his life fought against ill-fortune; he is now approaching old age, but is still far from the tranquillity which should attach to that state. Of all his children, I am the one whose future most worries him. I do not share his doubts, and endeavor to reassure him; but after a certain age one is impenetrable to the lively heat of courage and hope which fills and upholds youth. My father still entertains the same doubts as to my future; my own confidence in my star holds steady; and these two stubborn convictions sometimes clash in our conversation.

Although their natures are extremely dissimilar, my sisters are bound in the most perfect affection. Charged

plus parfaite. Chargées toutes de l'administration intérieure, elles s'y livrent avec un tel désintéressement d'autorité que jamais le plus petit point de contestation ne s'est élevé entre leurs commandements. Tous les jours en contact avec les plus menus détails de la vie, elles ont su se préserver de l'atteinte des petites choses, et c'est beaucoup pour le bonheur. Ce caractère uni qui ne se rompt jamais, ce calme qui ne s'altère qu'aux occasions vraiment dignes de trouble, contiennent la vivacité de mon père que la moindre étincelle fait éclater comme la poudre, mais qui est aussi prompt à se rasseoir qu'à s'emporter. Mon frère est une espèce de Hollandais pour le flegme. Tous les domestiques redoutent la manière tranquille de ses ordres et de ses reproches. Détourné de sa carrière dans la magistrature par la révolution, il s'est rabattu sur l'agriculture et y fait fructifier en gerbes et en tonneaux de vin la merveilleuse facilité de son esprit pour toutes choses. On dit qu'il est fort vif dans le monde, je n'y ai jamais été avec lui. Il a du moins le bon sens de ne pas emporter ce défaut hors de sa famille, tandis que moi . . . Vous n'avez pas oublié les trois semaines à St. Martin, Madame: je ne les oublierai pas, je vous jure: j'aurai toujours le repentir de ne pas avoir parlé assez: mais [heureusement que] le silence n'est pas un mal irréparable. Le voisinage qui se tient coi pendant l'hiver,

with the household management, they share it with such disinterested authority that there is never the tiniest point of disagreement in their orders. In daily contact with the most minute details of life, they have learned to protect themselves from the annoyance of petty things, and this counts largely for happiness. This natural poise which is never broken, this serenity which is never impaired save in times of real trouble, bridles the hot temper of my father, who explodes like powder at the least spark but who is as swift to calm down as to take fire.

My brother is a sort of Hollander, he is so phlegmatic. All the servants dread the quiet fashion of his orders and scoldings. His magistrate's career cut short by the revolution, he fell back upon agriculture, and brings the marvellous facility of his spirit to fruition in sheaves and wine-casks. They say he is very fiery when abroad, but I have never been in society with him; at least, he has the good sense not to carry this defect outside of his family, while I, on the other hand . . .

You have not forgotten those three weeks at St. Martin, Madame; I shall never forget them, I swear to you! I must ever repent of not having spoken freely enough, but silence is not an irreparable evil. The neighbors, who stay at home during the winter, keep

remplit le Cayla de visites dans la belle saison. Je renouvelle de vieilles connaissances et de fort jeunes aussi, mais que quelques années ont fait arriver à ce point où les formules respectueuses supplantent l'expression des souvenirs d'une enfance récente. La journée se passe dans cette grande salle dont je vous ai parlé. L'étendue de cette pièce permet qu'on y ménage quelque fraîcheur, s'il peut y en avoir lorsqu'on se trouve sous le poids de trente-six degrés d'une chaleur orageuse. Tous les soirs le tonnerre et les vents se chargent de remuer l'atmosphère accablée. Quand la soirée est belle, nous cherchons du délassement dans la promenade par les garennes. C'est un divertissement fort paisible, mais qui n'en a pas moins ses accidents. Avant-hier nous faisons visiter nos bois à une jeune dame du voisinage. Un ruisseau se rencontre, je le franchis et tends la main de l'autre bord à notre promeneuse. Deux pierres avaient été jetées dans le courant pour faciliter le passage; elle trouve que ce n'est pas assez et en place une autre entre ces deux beaucoup plus petite et d'une assiette assez incertaine: je lui fais remarquer la fausse position de cette pierre, mais inutilement: elle y pose le pied—tombe et prend une entorse dont elle souffre beaucoup. Madame, lui dis-je, il fallait un intermédiaire entre ces deux pierres, elles ne pouvaient s'en passer, mais vous avez fait votre

Cayla full of visitors during the fine season. I renew old acquaintances, and very young ones also, but the years have brought me to the point where respectful phrases replace the expression of childhood recollections. The day is usually passed in the large hall which I mentioned to you. The size of this room permits it to be kept cool, if this were possible with 36° of stormy heat. Every evening, wind and thunder freshen the sodden atmosphere.

When the afternoon is fine, we seek recreation by walking through the warrens; a very mild diversion, but which none the less has its incidents. Day before yesterday we were showing our woods to a young lady of the neighborhood. Coming to a brook, I crossed and from the other bank held out my hand to our guest. Two stones had been placed in the stream to aid the crossing. She declared they were not sufficient, and between them placed another, smaller and poorly seated. I warned her of the insecure position of this stone, but vainly. She stepped on it, fell, and suffered a sprain which is quite painful. "Madame," I told her, "an intermediary was needed between these two stones; they could not get on without one, but you made too careless a choice!" She smiled at my little moral despite her pain, for she realized that I suffered as much as she, merely because she was suffering.

choix trop légèrement. Malgré sa douleur, elle sourit à ma petite morale, car elle voyait bien que je souffrais autant qu'elle de ce qu'elle souffrait.

Voilà, Madame, une petite esquisse de l'intérieur du Cayla. L'intérêt que vous avez marqué pour ces sortes de peintures m'engage à en essayer quelques traits. Je devais cette fois mettre à fin l'interminable voyage; pardonnez-moi si j'ajourne encore cette conclusion je crains bien de raconter assez mal pour obtenir aisément mon pardon. Et puis, je commence à ressentir quelque changement dans mon goût pour le voyage: je ne crois pas que le bonheur soit errant; à mon avis, il est casanier; quand il a choisi sa demeure, il n'en sort plus. Je songe avec tristesse au pauvre Adrien qui va peut-être chercher bien loin de l'ennui et des regrets. Je vais lui écrire non pour l'engager à se rétracter de sa résolution, mais pour lui marquer tous les vœux dont je l'accompagne. Avez-vous reçu de bonnes nouvelles de Mme. de Ste. Marie et de St. Martin. Et vous-même, Madame, l'air sain et élevé des Coques continue-t-il à affermir vos forces? Permettez moi quelques inquiétudes et les questions qu'elles entraînent, en retour de l'intérêt dont vous avez bien voulu adoucir mes maux.

Veuillez, Madame, ne pas m'oublier auprès de M.

There, Madame, is a trifling sketch of the interior of Cayla. Your expressed interest in this sort of painting led me to try a few lines. I should this time bring my interminable trip to an end; pardon me if today I adjourn its conclusion. I fear it will be so poorly told that you will easily forgive me the delay. Also, I begin to feel a change in my taste for travel. I do not believe happiness is errant; I think it rather a domestic body, which chooses its dwelling and never leaves. I think sadly of poor Adrien, who perhaps will find that distance brings regret and weariness. I shall write him, not to advise him to change his plans, but to send all my good wishes to accompany him. Have you received any good news from Mme. de Sainte-Marie and St. Martin? And yourself, Madame—does the high and healthy air of Les Coques continue to strengthen you? Permit me these anxieties and the questions they involve, in return for the interest with which you have tempered my own ills.

Kindly do not forget to remember me to M. de Maistre, and receive, Madame, the homage of my very respectful devotion.

M. G. DU CAYLA

x x

x

de Maistre et agréer l'hommage du plus respectueux
attachement.

M. G. DU CAYLA

X X

X

*Madame la Baronne de Maistre
au château des Coques, par la Charité
Nièvre.*

Cachets: Gaillac 14;

La Charité 19 août 1837.

THE LETTERS

Mme. la Baronne de Maistre
Château des Coques, via La Charité
Nièvre

Postmarked: Gaillac, Aug. 14, 1837.

La Charité, Aug. 19, 1837.

Letter No. 11

Au Cayla, 7 8bre (1837)

Madame,

Il fait aujourd'hui le plus beau temps du monde, un jour d'automne d'une parfaite douceur. Je me demande si le soleil du Nivernais vous est aussi favorable qu'il l'est pour nous et si vous pouvez, libre de toute souffrance, jouir de sa beauté? Etes-vous bien remise de cette affreuse secousse? Etes-vous guérie d'une façon parfaite? Je remonte peu à peu vers la santé et rien n'est plus doux que ce petit mouvement dont on se sent porté chaque jour vers la guérison; mais s'il survient alors des inquiétudes comme celles que j'ai sur votre santé, adieu tout le charme de la convalescence.

J'espère que j'échapperai bientôt au médecin, mais la surveillance de mes sœurs restera et je ne m'en affranchirai pas aussi facilement. Je me sauve et me cache pour écrire: on prétend que je suis encore trop faible pour me livrer à la moindre application. Pour moi, toujours muni de bonnes raisons comme un écologiste pris en faute, je réponds quand on me surprend, que ce qui charme l'esprit ne peut nuire au corps et qu'à suivre ses pensées il arrive souvent qu'on oublie ses souffrances.

Vous voyez sans doute, ces jours-ci de votre balcon et de votre ajoupa favori les vendangeurs répandus sur

Letter No. 11

Cayla, Oct. 7 (1837)

Madame:

"Il fait aujourd'hui le plus beau temps du monde—"

—an autumn day of perfect sweetness. I wonder whether the sun is as favorable to you in the Nivernais as it is to us, and whether you, free of all suffering, can enjoy its beauty? Have you quite recovered from that frightful shock? Are you completely cured? I am gradually regaining health, and nothing could be sweeter than this feeling of being carried each day a little farther toward a cure; but when worries come, like this one about your health, then adieu to all the charm of convalescence!

I hope soon to be rid of the doctor, but the surveillance of my sisters remains and I shall not so easily win free of it. I run away and hide in order to write; they pretend I am still too weak for the least effort. As for me, always furnished with good excuses like a schoolboy taken in fault, I reply when they catch me at it that what charms the spirit cannot hurt the body, and that one may forget his sufferings by losing himself in thought.

Doubtless, these days, you are looking from your balcony or your favorite *ajoupa* at the grape-pickers along your hillsides. Here there is no scene of grape-

vos coteaux. Ici point de panorama de vendange ni d'aucune sorte. Notre horizon est une scène étroite et muette. Aussi dès son réveil mon imagination qui se plaît aux perspectives étendues et un peu vagues s'est-elle donné du mieux qu'elle a pu le spectacle de vos campagnes infinies faisant revivre tous les souvenirs du charmant belvédère que vous habitez. Ces voyages imaginaires seront d'ici à quelque temps ma seule manière de sortir d'ici. Je ne hasarderai pas le mot de départ avant un mois et demi, et je crois réellement qu'il ne me faudra pas moins pour reprendre mes forces.

L'heureux Adrien est sans doute en ce moment en pleine satisfaction de son humeur voyageuse. Voudriez-vous avoir la bonté de ne pas me laisser ignorer ce que vous savez de l'état de sa santé et de son voyage. Voilà le soleil qui se couche et cela me rappelle une partie de Walter Scott qui se rapporte bien au départ de ce pauvre Adrien. Il compare le sentiment de l'absence à la tristesse qui nous gagne quelquefois aussitôt que le soleil a disparu derrière l'horizon.—Je vous prie, Madame, d'avoir toujours la même indulgence pour mon griffonage. D'ailleurs bien ou mal portant, pourrai-je

picking or anything else. Our horizon is a narrow and undisturbed scene. As soon as I waken, my imagination, which is delighted by long and rather vague prospects, flies as best it can to the view of your endless fields, reviving all my memories of the charming belvedere where you live. These imaginary travels will for some time to come be my only way of going out. I shall not dare mention leaving before a month and a half, and I really think no shorter time will be sufficient for me to regain my strength.

Happy Adrien is at this moment doubtless satisfying all his craving for travel. Please have the kindness to keep me informed of what you know concerning his trip and his state of health. Now the sun is sinking; and this reminds me of a phrase of Walter Scott which bears on the departure of poor Adrien. He compares the feeling of absence to the sadness which sometimes comes over us as soon as the sun disappears below the horizon.

I beg of you, Madame, ever to treat my scribbling with the same indulgence. Moreover, whether I am well or ill, can I ever express to you as I should like, how truly I am your servant?

M. G. DU CAYLA

vous exprimer jamais comme je le voudrais combien
je suis votre serviteur.

M. G. DU CAYLA

Madame la Baronne de Maistre

au château des Coques, par la Charité

Nièvre.

Cachet: 12 Oct. 1837.

Mme. la Baronne de Maistre

Château des Coques, via La Charité,

Nièvre

Postmarked: Cordes, Oct. 8, 1837.

La Charité, Oct. 12, 1837.

Letter No. 12

Au Cayla, 26 8bre (1837)

Madame,

Vous savez à peine l'histoire de la maladie dont je relève, et moi-même je n'ai appris que depuis peu quel était mon mal et sa gravité. Heureusement nous voici au port et dans cette situation où le récit des dangers passés n'est pas dépourvu de charmes. Je me réveille comme d'une longue léthargie. Les accès de fièvre d'abord violents et réguliers, avaient dégénéré en fièvre continue, faible en apparence, mais opiniâtre, où quinine, quina, quinquina et mille autres drogues perdaient leur crédit. Je tombai dans un tel anéantissement que je passais des journées entières sans que j'eusse la conscience d'une seule pensée qui eût traversé mon esprit. Je ne vivais plus que par le corps. Le médecin déclara à mon père qu'il lui restait peu d'espoir à moins qu'une consultation ne trouvât encore quelque ressource. Mais on avait eu recours à de plus puissants moyens. Mes sœurs qui sont bien avec le ciel, lui avaient demandé ma guérison, elles avaient fait une neuvaine, et le lendemain du jour où elle expira, je me réveillai si sensiblement soulagé que je dis à la première personne qui ouvrit mes rideaux, je crois vraiment que je suis guéri; et c'était la veille que le médecin avait prononcé ma condamnation. Que pen-

Letter No. 12

Cayla, Oct. 26 (1837)

Madame:

You scarcely know the history of the illness from which I am recovering, and I myself have only recently learned what and how serious my trouble was. Happily we are now out of the woods and in that state where the tale of perils past is not without charms.

I am awakened as from a long coma. The attacks of fever, at first violent and regular, degenerated into a continuous fever, apparently low, but so stubborn that quinine, quina, quinquina and a thousand other drugs had no effect. I fell into such inertia that I would lie for whole days without being conscious of a single thought passing through my brain. My body alone was alive. The doctor told my father he had little hope, unless a consultation should find some remedy.

Meanwhile, they had recourse to more potent means. My sisters, who stand well with heaven, implored it to cure me. They began a novena, and the day after it ended I wakened, so obviously relieved that I said to the first person who opened my curtains: "Truly, I believe I am cured!" This was the morning after the doctor had given me up.

What think you, Madame, of this marvellous cure—this grace from heaven in favor of a believer as little

sez-vous, Madame, de cette guérison merveilleuse, et de cette bonté du ciel appliquée à un croyant d'aussi peu de mérite que moi ? Cela ne peut s'expliquer que par le passage où il est dit que Dieu est venu pour sauver non les justes mais les pécheurs. Ma santé serait très satisfaisante aujourd'hui si le rhume n'avait survécu à l'autre maladie. Je me mettrais peu en peine si je pouvais me dispenser de rentrer à Paris ; mais il faut absolument que cela se fasse. Des motifs qui ne souffrent pas que je balance, m'y appellent, et me font supporter bien impatiemment les retards qu'éprouve mon retour.

Voici la campagne qui se dépouille et la bise qui commence à souffler. Comment supportez-vous ces premières épreuves de la triste saison ? Vous savez, Madame, que les nouvelles de votre santé me trouvent toujours dans l'impatience.

J'aime à penser que vous recevez toujours de bonnes nouvelles d'Adrien. Je vous prie de vouloir bien lui parler de moi.

Je remercie bien vivement Monsieur de Maistre de l'intérêt qu'il a pris à ma situation. Je vous prie, Madame, de lui exprimer pour moi ces sentiments et de

deserving as I am? This can only be explained by the passage where it is said that God is come to save not the just but the sinners. Today my health would be quite satisfactory, had not a cold followed the other illness. I should care little, were I able to dispense with returning to Paris; but this is absolutely imperative. Certain reasons which cannot be gainsaid impel me thither, and make me endure very impatiently the delays which hinder my return.

Now the fields are all bare and the north wind begins to blow. How do you stand these first sad hints of the dreary season? You know, Madame, that I am always impatient for news of your health.

I earnestly hope that you receive only good news from Adrien. I pray you, mention me in your letter to him. I thank M. de Maistre very deeply for the interest he has taken in my illness. I beg you, Madame, give him my regards and believe me, most respectfully, your devoted servant

M. G. DU CAYLA.

*Mme. la Baronne de Maistre,
Château des Coques, via La Charité
Nièvre*

Postmarked: Gaillac, Oct. 27, 1837.

La Charité, Oct. 31, 1837.

croire à ceux pleins de respect que vous garde votre
dévoué serviteur

M. G. DU CAYLA.

*Madame la Baronne de Maistre
au château des Coques, par la Charité
Nièvre.*

Cachets: Gaillac 27 Oct.

La Charité 31 Oct. 1837.

Letter No. 13

Au Cayla, 18 Xbre (1837)

Madame,

Madame de Ste. Marie a eu la bonté d'écrire à ma soeur pour lui demander des nouvelles de ma santé. Il y avait plusieurs semaines que vous n'aviez rien reçu de moi à l'époque où elle vous a quittée et c'est dans l'inquiétude que lui a causée ce silence qu'elle s'est adressée à ma soeur. Je suis vivement touché de cette sollicitude et rien ne m'est plus précieux que cette nouvelle marque d'intérêt qu'elle vient de me donner; mais je souffre en même temps de voir que durant un mois vous avez pu croire à ma négligence et concevoir de nouvelles inquiétudes sur ma santé. Vous m'avez accusé peut-être, et moi j'accuse l'accident inconnu qui a empêché ma dernière lettre d'arriver jusqu'à vous. Je vous écrivais lorsque ma main était tremblante, et c'était une des plus douces compensations à mes souffrances; suis-je plus paresseux aujourd'hui que les forces me sont revenues et en ressaisissant la vie laisserait-on échapper les plus précieux souvenirs? S'il en était ainsi, soyez sure, Madame, que j'aimerais mille fois mieux le souvenir de vos bontés parmi les souffrances que la plus florissante santé avec l'oubli des devoirs que vous avez si généreusement imposés à mon coeur.

Letter No. 13

Cayla, Dec. 18 (1837)

Madame:

Madame de Sainte-Marie has had the kindness to write my sister asking for news of my health. At the time she left you, many weeks ago, you had received no word from me, and in her worry over this silence she addressed herself to my sister. I am deeply touched by this solicitude, and nothing could be more precious to me than this fresh token of her interest; but at the same time I am grieved to see that for a month you must have deemed me negligent, and have conceived new anxiety as to my health. You have perhaps accused me, but I accuse the unknown happening which kept my last letter from reaching you. I wrote you while my hand was still trembling, and it was one of the sweetest compensations for my suffering; should I be more indolent today when strength has returned to me, and in regaining life let its most precious remembrances escape me? Were it thus, be certain, Madame, that I should a thousand times prefer pain with a vivid remembrance of your kindness, to the most flourishing health with a neglect of the duties you have so generously imposed upon my heart!

I prolong my sojourn here far beyond the term I had assigned myself; but who can boast of the future,

Je prolonge mon séjour ici bien au-delà du terme que je m'étais fixé; mais qui peut sans folie se fier à l'avenir? L'hiver s'annonce avec une douceur extrême. Le ciel est presque constamment pur et l'air aussi velouté qu'aux plus beaux jours de Septembre. Le soleil quoique languissant et d'un cours si borné, répand assez de chaleur pour mûrir une convalescence. Je profite de ces douces influences pour achever la mienne et je pourrais dire que je suis au bout de l'oeuvre n'était un reste d'irritation de poitrine qui après s'être fort adoucie comme je vous l'annonçais persiste encore et refuse de s'amollir aux rayons de notre beau soleil. Mais j'espère qu'un petit point malade dans un corps plein de santé ne pourra faire longue résistance et que la vie qui remonte en moi l'emportera dans son mouvement.

Je vous expliquais dans ma dernière lettre les raisons qui me pressent tant de repartir pour Paris: ce sont raisons qui ne souffrent point de réplique, raisons d'argent et de position. Il faut, comme on dit, faire honneur à ses affaires, et cela est impossible ici. Mlle. Martin-Laforest avec sa nièce s'est arrêtée ici quelque temps. On a éclairci autant qu'on a pu la question d'avenir, mais dans l'incertitude on est convenu de n'en parler à personne.

Je songe toujours aux rigueurs de l'hiver que vous

without folly? Winter is ushered in very sweetly. The sky is almost continually clear and the air as velvety as in the finest days of September. The sun, although failing and in shortened course, gives enough warmth to perfect a convalescence. I profit by these gentle aids to complete mine, and might say that I had done so were it not for a lingering irritation of the chest; this, after being much improved, as I wrote you, still persists and refuses to yield to the rays of our fine sun. However, I hope that one tiny sick point in a body full of health cannot make a long resistance, and that the life-stream mounting in me will carry it off in its course.

In my last letter I explained the reasons which so press me to depart for Paris; they are reasons which suffer no denial, reasons of finance and of position. It is necessary, as they say, to honor one's business; but this is impossible here. Mlle. Martin-Laforest and her niece stopped here some little time. The question of the future was settled as far as was possible, but in the present uncertainty it is agreed not to mention it to anyone.

I think continually of the rigorous winter which you have to face with your feeble health at the crest of your mountain. Assure me that neither you nor M. de Maistre, nor your dear little daughter, are suffering

affrontez avec votre faible santé, au sommet de votre montagne. Assurez-moi que ni vous, ni Monsieur de Maistre, ni votre chère petite fille n'en souffrez: ce sont les meilleures nouvelles que puisse recevoir votre serviteur

M. G. DU CAYLA.

Madame la Baronne de Maistre

au château des Coques, par la Charité.

Nièvre. P. P. (partie pour) St. Martin par St. Saulze.

from it. This will be the best news that can be given
your devoted servant

M. G. DU CAYLA.

*Madame la Baronne de Maistre,
Château des Coques, via La Charité
Nièvre.*

Letter No. 14

Au Cayla, 7 Janvier (1838)

Madame,

Me voici encore au Cayla malgré tous les beaux projets de départ que je fais depuis plus de deux mois. Pour la première fois depuis seize ans je me trouve dans ma famille à cette époque de l'année. Je suis tout étonné de voir les scènes de l'hiver à la campagne; je goûte avec une sorte de surprise la vie calme dont on y jouit et le bonheur de saluer de près mes parents de ces vœux que j'étais accoutumé de leur exprimer de si loin. C'est comme une régénération que j'éprouve dans le renouvellement des émotions d'autrefois, et l'on se sent presque rajeuni en puisant après si longtemps aux sources du bonheur de l'enfance. Mais il y a dans ce monde des joies qu'on ne peut plus goûter qu'en passant, une fois qu'on s'est éloigné des lieux qui nous les donnaient. Ce bonheur de famille dont je jouis en ce moment, doit bientôt finir. Je vais retourner à Paris. J'y vais avec l'espérance d'un avenir meilleur, d'une destinée nouvelle, dans le sein d'une famille d'adoption: cela m'adoucit un peu le déchirement de la séparation d'ici, mais, à quelque bonheur que l'on coute le moment où l'on se dit adieu n'en est pas moins amer; c'est seulement la perspective de l'ave-

Letter No. 14

Cayla, Jan. 7 (1838)

Madame:

Here I am still at Cayla despite all the fine projects of departure I had been making for above two months. For the first time in sixteen years, I am with my family at this season of the year. I find myself astonished by the winter-scenes of the country; with a sort of surprise I taste the calm life they enjoy here, and the happiness of personally giving my family the New Year's greetings I have been used to sending from afar. I experience a kind of regeneration in renewing the emotions of yesteryear, and in drinking after so long a time at the springs of childhood happiness I feel myself almost rejuvenated. Yet there are joys in this world which one can only sip in passing, once we have departed from the place whence they arose. This enjoyment of the family, which at this moment delights me, must soon end, for I am returning to Paris.

I go in the hope of a better future, of a new destiny, into the bosom of an adopted family; this somewhat dulls the pangs of separation from those here; but no matter what happiness beckons, the moment of saying adieu is no less bitter. It is only the future perspective which is softened and lighted up by the hope one carries along. I enter into this family, come from the

nir qui se trouve adoucie et comme éclaircie par l'espérance que l'on emporte. J'entre dans cette famille venue des Indes dont je vous ai parlé quelquefois et que je vous fis connaître par quelques lettres que j'avais apportées à St. Martin. Les projets sont arrêtés, mais l'époque de leur accomplissement demeure incertaine.

Adrien a donc retranché beaucoup de ses vastes projets? Je le savais déjà, mais j'ai été le plus agréablement surpris du monde d'apprendre qu'il était à Paris quand je le croyais à Vienne.

Vous êtes encore à St. Martin dont les jardins, les rotondes et la charmille ne ressemblent guère sans doute à ce que j'y ai vu. Mais ce n'est pas vers des feuillages qui ne sont plus que vont mes souvenirs, c'est à la bonté et l'aimable hospitalité des habitués que rien, n'altère.

Veillez, Madame, faire agréer mes souvenirs et mes vœux à Monsieur de Ste. Marie ainsi qu'à Madame Lanoir.

Ma soeur me prie de joindre l'expression de ses vœux à ceux qu'inspirent aujourd'hui la reconnais-

Indies, which I have sometimes mentioned to you, and with whom I made you acquainted through some letters I brought to St. Martin. The plans are made, the time of their fulfilment remaining uncertain.

Adrien has, then, curtailed some of his great plans? I knew it already, but was most agreeably surprised to learn that he was at Paris when I thought him at Vienne.

You are still at St. Martin where the gardens, arbors and grove are doubtless far from the state in which I saw them. But my memories fly not to the leaves that vanish but to the kindness and the friendly hospitality of the occupants, which nothing alters.

Kindly accept my remembrances, Madame, and give my best wishes to M. de Sainte-Marie as well as to Madame Lanoir. My sister begs me to join her best wishes to those today inspired by the gratitude and devotion of your respectful servant

M. G. DU CAYLA.

My remembrances, I pray you, with kisses to Valentine and Henriette.

Mme. de Ste. Marie,

Château de St. Martin, via St. Saulze,

Nièvre.

Postmarked: Gaillac, Jan. 10, 1838.

St. Saulze, Jan. 15, 1838.

sance et le dévouement à votre respectueux serviteur

M. G. DU CAYLA.

Mon souvenir, je vous prie, avec des baisers à Valentine et Henriette.

Madame de Ste. Marie

au château de St. Martin, par St. Saulze.

Nièvre.

Cachet: Saint Saulze 15 Jan. 1838.

Letter No. 15

Paris, 8 gbre (1838)

Madame,

Le jour de mon mariage est enfin fixé d'une manière certaine au quinze de ce mois. J'ai trop de marques de votre amitié et de celle de Monsieur de Maistre pour ne pas m'assurer que vous penserez un peu à moi ce jour-là et que vous ne me laisserez pas sans m'accompagner de quelques vœux, entrer dans l'église de l'abbaye-aux-bois.

C'est moi qui retiens ici ma sœur qui depuis longtemps devrait être auprès de vous, mais vous nous pardonnerez bien de vouloir être ensemble ce jour là, et je serai sans doute excusé d'avoir gardé une soeur quand je voudrais voir tous mes amis autour de moi.

Serez-vous encore long-temps aux Coques? Vous y attarderez-vous autant que l'année dernière et votre santé ne souffrirait-elle pas d'hiverner ainsi à la campagne? C'est un rêve que je fais en ce moment de votre prochain retour à Paris et du bonheur dont vous seriez cause si vous vouliez bien nous donner votre voisinage dans le faubourg St. Germain. Tout prosaïque et positif que je suis devenu, je puis encore me livrer à des songes et je n'aime pas assez le terre-à-terre pour ne pas former des projets où les charmes élevés de la vie ont quelque part.

Letter No. 15

Paris, Nov. 9 (1838)

Madame:

My wedding-day is now definitely fixed for the fifteenth of this month. I have too many tokens of your friendship and that of M. de Maistre not to be certain that you will think of me a little on that day, and that you will not let me enter the church of Abbaye-aux-Bois without your best wishes accompanying me.

It is I who keep my sister here—she should have joined you long ago. But you will assuredly pardon us for wishing to be together on this day, and doubtless I may be excused for having retained a sister at the time I desire to see all my friends around me.

Will you be long at Coques? Will you linger there as you did last year, and will not your health suffer from thus wintering in the country? I am dreaming at this moment of your coming return to Paris, and of the happiness you would give us did you wish to become our neighbors in the Faubourg St. Germain. Prosaic and positive though I have become, I can still indulge in dreams. I am not yet sufficiently of the earth, earthy, not to make plans in which the charms of the higher life will have some share.

Kindly, Madame, give my remembrances to M. de

Veillez, Madame, dire tous mes souvenirs à Monsieur de Maistre et me permettre l'expression de mon respectueux attachement.

M. G. DU CAYLA

*Madame la Bnne de Maistre
au château des Coques, par la Charité
Nièvre.*

Cachets: La Charité 10 Nov. 1838.

Paris 9 Nov. 1838.

Maistre and permit me the expression of my respectful attachment.

M. G. DU CAYLA

Mme. la Baronne de Maistre

Château des Coques, via la Charité

Nièvre.

Postmarked: Paris, Nov. 9, 1838.

La Charité, Nov. 10, 1838.

Letter No. 16

Paris 8 Xbre (1838)

Madame,

Nous ne recevons point de nouvelles de ma soeur qui est partie lundi dernier, c'est à-dire depuis cinq jours, espace de temps qui suffit, je crois, pour qu'une lettre puisse venir des Coques ici. Nous serions fort en peine, fut-elle partie dans la plus belle saison et avec la meilleure compagnie: mais nous l'avons embarquée par un temps si fâcheux et en si étrange compagnie (des ouvriers affreux, je ne sais quoi), que nous sommes dans les plus cruelles angoisses, et vous supplions de nous dire la vérité, quelque chose qui puisse être arrivée. Je ne puis vous exprimer le saisissement que j'éprouvai quand la portière de la diligence s'ouvrit et me fit voir avec qui Eugénie allait voyager. Mais pouvait-on reculer?

Peut-être ces hommes sales et grossiers sont-ils moins incommodes que des commis-voyageurs et autres beaux-esprits de diligence. Nous avons épuisé tous les raisonnements pour nous rassurer. Mme. de Vaux, l'avocate du pauvre peuple, nous a presque garanti leur discrétion; mais rien ne peut faire cesser l'inquiétude que les bonnes nouvelles, et l'on raisonnerait jusqu'à la Pentecôte qu'on trouverait au bout les mêmes craintes et aussi vives.

Letter No. 16

Paris, Dec. 8 (1838)

Madame:

We have had no word from my sister, who left last Monday—that is to say, five days ago, a sufficient length of time for a letter to have arrived here from Coques, I think. We should be much worried had she left in good weather and with the best of company; but we sent her off in such unpleasant weather and in such queer company (horrible workmen, and I know not what) that we are in the most cruel suspense, and beg you to tell us the truth, whatever may have happened. I cannot tell you what dismay I felt on opening the door of the diligence and seeing in what company Eugénie was to travel! But could we have drawn back?

Perhaps these rude and dirty men might prove less bothersome than commercial travellers and other sprightly spirits of the stage-coach. We have exhausted all arguments to reassure ourselves. Mme. de Vaux, the advocate of the poor, has almost guaranteed their discretion; but nothing can dispel our anxiety except good tidings, and one could argue until Pentecost without escaping the same acute fears.

I beseech you, Madame, restore our tranquillity, or at least enlighten us as soon as you can. You will have

Je vous supplie, Madame, de nous rendre la tranquillité, ou de nous éclaircir le plutôt que vous pourrez. Vous aurez un droit nouveau à la reconnaissance de votre serviteur dévoué et respectueux

M. G. DU CAYLA.

*Madame la bñne de Maistre
au château des Coques, par la Charité
Nièvre.*

Cachets: Paris 8 Déc. 1838.

La Charité 9 Déc. 1838.

a new claim on the gratitude of your devoted and
respectful servant

M. G. DU CAYLA.

Mme. la Baronne de Maistre

Château des Coques, via La Charité

Nièvre.

Postmarked: Paris, Dec. 8, 1838.

La Charité, Dec. 9, 1838.

Letter No. 17

Paris, 3 janvier (1839)

Madame,

Ma soeur nous a fait espérer votre retour pour les premiers jours de ce mois. Mais je crains toujours quelque retard, et ne veux pas remettre à un terme incertain mes souhaits de bonne année: ce serait peut-être encourir un reproche d'oubli dont le simple soupçon serait un chagrin pour moi, venant de votre part. Vous êtes devenue, permettez moi cette expression, doublement chère à ma reconnaissance depuis que vous flattez d'une manière si douce et si charmante mon amitié pour ma soeur. Ses lettres sont remplies de vos bontés et me rendent heureux à la fois de l'hospitalité que vous lui donnez et du souvenir de celle que j'ai reçue. Les descriptions qu'elle me donne en me ramenant aux mêmes lieux me racontent les mêmes traits et me rendent le passé.

Qu'il serait heureux que votre santé vous permette d'entreprendre en ce moment le voyage de Paris. Le temps est doux et tout à fait favorable: des rigueurs prochaines sont à craindre. Nous vous verrions, et l'un de nos vœux serait accompli. Remplissez celui-là, Madame, puisque vous y pouvez quelque chose; si le ciel est touché de la sincérité du coeur, il se chargera de vous faire ressentir l'effet de tous les autres vœux que

Letter No. 17

Paris, Jan. 3, 1839

Madame:

My sister bids us hope for your return in the early part of this month; but I ever fear some delay, and do not wish to postpone my good wishes for a happy New Year to some uncertain date. This might give rise to the reproach of having forgotten you—and the mere suspicion, coming from you, would distress me. You are become double dear to my gratitude, if you will permit the expression, since you flatter, in so gentle and charming a manner, my affection for my sister. Her letters are full of your kindness, and render me happy both in the hospitality you give her and in the memory of that which I received. Her descriptions, in carrying me back to the same spots, outline the same scenes and reanimate the past.

How fortunate if your health would permit you to undertake the trip to Paris now! The weather is mild and altogether favorable; but we dread the severity to come. We would see you, and one of our wishes would be fulfilled. Do you fulfill it then, Madame, since you have the power. If Heaven can be touched by a heart's sincerity, it will make you feel the effect of all our other wishes, with regard to your sufferings and to so many other deserts less vexing to yourself and to us.

nous formons en songeant à vos souffrances et à tant d'autres mérites moins fâcheux pour vous et pour nous.

Madame de Guérin se joint à l'expression de mes vœux.

Veillez, Madame, dire à Monsieur de Maistre et à Madame de Ste. Marie tout ce que vous savez qui est dans mon cœur, en lui faisant agréer mes vœux.

Je suis avec respect, Madame, et d'une façon toute dévouée,

votre serviteur

M. G. DU CAYLA.

*Madame la Bonne de Maistre
rue du Sort, à Nevers.*

Cachets: Paris 6 jan. 1839.

Nevers 7 jan. 1839.

Mme. de Guérin joins in my good wishes. Kindly, Madame, tell M. de Maistre and Mme. de Sainte-Marie all you know to be in my heart, and extend my best wishes to them. I am, Madame, with respect and in entirely devoted fashion, your servant

M. G. DU CAYLA.

Mme. la Baronne de Maistre,

Rue du Sort, Nevers.

Postmarked: Paris, Jan. 6, 1839.

Nevers, Jan. 7, 1839.

Letter No. 18

(15 juin, 1839)

Si vous voyez Maurice, dites lui que la diligence que je prends fait deux ou trois couchées, et qu'un peu de retard ne doit pas l'étonner.

Qu'il prenne toutes ses drogues homéopathiques, un coussin pour voyager, un certain *écrin* dont je lui ai parlé. Enfin je voudrais vous savoir près de lui jusqu'à l'entrée en diligence pour son plaisir et pour son bien. Il lui faudrait quelque chose de fort, du contre-nerveux dans les vapeurs et les larmes qui vont l'envahir, ce lieu de départ, cette séparation des femmes, de tante et de nièce. Vous savez que ce voyage les déchire et comme Maurice prend ces choses, toujours contre au lieu de dessus. C'est assez vous entretenir de votre pauvre ami. Qu'ai-je besoin de vous rien dire, finalement adieu, Monsieur.

EUGÉNIE.

Monsieur Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly
rue de Port-Mahon, Hotel de Nuestrie, 9
Paris.

Cachet: La Charité 15 juin, 1839.

Letter No. 18

(A half sheet, the first half being gone.)

(June 15, 1839)

If you see Maurice, tell him that the diligence which I took made two or three halts, and that a little delay need not worry him.

Let him take all his homeopathic drugs, a travelling pillow, and a certain casket of which I spoke to him. I should like to know that you are beside him until he enters the diligence, both for his pleasure and for his well-being. He will need a certain backing and nerve tonic among the tears and hysterics which will surround him in this place of farewells at the separation of two women, aunt and niece. You know how this trip will harrow them, and how Maurice takes such things—always the wrong way instead of the right way. But enough about your poor friend—why should I say anything? So adieu, Monsieur.

EUGÉNIE.

M. Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly,

Rue de Port Mahon, Hotel de Neustrie, 9, Paris.

Postmarked: La Charité, June 15, 1839.

Letter No. 19

10 (Juillet, 1839)

. . . Je sais ce que ces distances ont de terrible pour quelqu'un qui voit un ami malade au delà. Aussi, Monsieur, je vous écrirai pour ne pas vous laisser en peine dans le rien savoir si cruel au coeur. Le vôtre pour Maurice (mérite) bien cette attention. Vous retrouver . . . ainsi quelque peu de vie (ensemble) de cette vie si intime, si une que vous meniez deux amis à plein charme dans ce grand Paris ou vous êtes seul à présent. Lui ne vous écrira guère encore, il est trop faible, il m'en a chargée et de vous faire ses tendresses, tendresses d'homme bien fortes. L'éveillé vous touche la main. Mon Père aussi veut que je vous parle de lui, notre Caro vous fait ses grâces, tout le Cayla des amitiés. Croyez nous, monsieur, parlez de vous-êtes vous vendu?

EUGÉNIE.

M. Jules B. d'Aurevilly
rue de Port-Mahon, Hotel de Neustrie, 9
Paris.

Cachets: Gaillac 12 Juill. 1839.

Paris 15 Juillet 1839.

Letter No. 19

(A half sheet, the first half offering only fragmentary phrases.)

(July) 10 (1839)

. . . I know that distance is a terrible thing to him who sees a friend ill from afar. That is why, Monsieur, I write you in order not to leave you in the suspense, so cruel to the heart, of having no news. Your friendship for Maurice well (merits) this attention. Thus you will again take up somewhat of your life together—that life so intimate, so identical, which you led; two perfect friends, amid this huge Paris where you are at present alone.

He is scarcely able to write you yet, being too feeble. He asks me to send you his love—the strong love of a man. Wakening, he touches your hand. My father also desires to be remembered to you, our Caro sends you her thanks, and all Cayla joins its regards. Believe us, Monsieur; and speak of yourself—did you sell your book?

EUGÉNIE.

*M. Jules B. d'Aurevilly,
Rue de Port Mahon, Hotel de Neustrie, 9, Paris.
Postmarked: Gaillac, July 12, 1839.
Paris, July 15, 1839.*

Letter No. 20

Nevers, le 28 Xbre (1839)

Je suis désolée Monsieur, de n'avoir pas su huit jours plus tôt qu'une *conspiration*—ou tout au moins une nouvelle politique de quelque intérêt, en avait un très grand pour vous. J'arrive du Château de l'Etang, chez M. le Baron Hyde Neuville qui lui-même arrive de Kirchberg et a des relations assez fréquentes avec Bourges. C'était donc un vrai nid de carlistes, où j'aurais pu apprendre quelque fait; mais l'indifférence *absolute* que j'éprouve pour toutes choses, et surtout en matière politique, m'a fait négliger les questions, et je n'ai pas le moins du monde sollicité des confidences que j'aurais facilement obtenues. J'en ai un chagrin réel ainsi que de mon peu de curiosité (moi qui l'avais si vive naguère) qui ne s'est même pas émue du royal voisinage de Bourges, de cette cour en prison où voulait me conduire M. Hyde. Mais aussi comment deviner que tout cela pouvait vous obliger.—Maintenant malgré mon désir de le faire je me creuse vainement la tête je ne vois rien à écrire *confidentiellement* à madame de V. pas la moindre nouvelle, le plus petit mot anarchiste et quand à inventer une *grosse conspiration* comme me le mande Eugénie qui trouve cela tout simple, je ne sais pas si c'est moi qui le suis. Mais par le temps qui court je ne trouve pas du tout la chose

Letter No. 20

Nevers, Dec. 28 (1839)

I am distressed, Monsieur, at not having known eight days earlier that a conspiracy—or at least a political movement—of minor interest could have very great interest for you. I have just returned from the Château de l'Etang, where Baron Hyde de Neuville had himself just come home from Kirchberg; and he has quite frequent relations with Bourges. So you see it was a true nest of Carlists, where I might have learned something; but my entire indifference to such things, above all to politics, caused me to neglect asking questions, and I sought none of the confidences I might easily have obtained.¹

Also, I feel great chagrin that my feeble curiosity—but lately so active—was not even awakened by the royal neighborhood of Bourges, by this prisoned court whither M. Hyde wished to take me. But how could I guess that all this could interest you? And now, despite the best will in the world, I wrinkle my brow all in vain; I can see nothing to write in confidence to Madame de V.; not the least news item, not the small-

¹ The letters written by Eugenie during the winter of 1838, from Nevers, contain many details on the "legitimists" and on Madame de Vaux, "the Joan of Arc of Henry V, who in 1830 asked an officer of the Royal Guard for fifty men, in order to get rid of Philippe; she would have marched at their head, sword in hand." (To M. de Guérin, Jan. 20, 1839.) The family of Maistre saw much of Hyde de Neuville, former minister of Charles X, both in Paris and in Nevers.

facile et n'ai pas à ce sujet l'imagination de M. Delessert. Une lettre de présentation ne m'embarrasserait pas du tout, mais d'après ce que m'écrit Eugénie j'ai cru voir que vous désiriez une lettre d'introduction et non de présentation. Vous ne voulez pas qu'il paraisse de votre part la moindre préméditation, je dois jouer le rôle du hasard, ou mieux de la providence pour quelque peu que ce soit c'est (sic) un beau rôle, mais souvent dangereux, car il peut arriver que lorsqu'on voudrait être la providence, la plus bienfaisante ne se trouve la fatalité. J'espère cependant que je ne vous serai pas si fatale car à l'instant même où je trace ces lignes il me vient une idée je pourrais dire lumineuse. N'ayant rien à apprendre à Madame de V. je vais la faire questionner, et à l'occasion de 1840 faire les vœux les plus seditieux, les plus incendiaries, de façon à motiver un autre couvert que le . . . je lui dis que vous lui remettrez ma lettre vous même.

Depuis un grand malheur, je n'ai eu l'occasion ni de vous voir, ni de vous écrire, d'après ce que je sais de cette amitié si vive et si profonde. Il vaudrait mieux pour vous ne l'avoir jamais ressentie; vous ne sauriez pas maintenant tout ce qui vous manque. Les vœux des gens frappés de la foudre portent malheur, dit-on; je n'ose alors vous en adresser aucun, mais toujours me

est anarchist phrase! As to inventing a huge conspiracy as Eugénie counsels me—she finds it all very simple, but I suspect I am the simple one; as I think it over, I do not find it an easy matter at all, and I lack the imagination of M. Delessert in this respect.

A letter of presentation would not embarrass me in the least; but after what Eugénie wrote me, I believe you want a letter of introduction, not of presentation. You do not desire to evince the least premeditation. I must play the rôle of Chance, or rather of Providence; while it lasts it is a fine rôle, but often dangerous, for it might happen that when one desired to be a most beneficent Providence, only disaster might ensue. I hope, however, that I shall not be of such ill-omen to you, for as I write these words an idea comes to me—I might call it a sparkling idea! Having nothing to tell Madame de V., I shall question her; on New Year's Day I shall give her the most seditious and incendiary greetings, in such fashion as to hint at more than I say, and tell her that you yourself will bear my letter.

Since a great loss, I have not had a chance to see you or write you. From what I knew of this deep and strong friendship, it had been better for you had you never enjoyed it—you would not know how much you lost. They say the good wishes of people struck by

faut-il vous assurer de mes sentiments de consideration et d'estime particulière.

BARONNE DE MAISTRE.

P. S. Madame de Vaux reçoit tous les jours de 4 à 6 heures. Je suis ici pour 15 jours encore.

Monsieur d'Aurevilly

rue de Port-Mahon, 9

Paris.

Cachet: Nevers 29 Déc. 1839.

lightning bring ill-luck; so I dare address none to you. However, be always certain of my feeling of consideration and great esteem.

BARONNE DE MAISTRE.

P. S. Madame de Vaux receives every day from four until six o'clock. I shall be here another fortnight.

M. d'Aurevilly,

Rue du Port Mahon, 9, Paris.

Postmarked: Nevers, Dec. 29, 1839.

Paris, Dec. 30, 1839.

Letter No. 21

7 juillet (1840)

Votre dernière lettre a été pour moi le sujet d'une indicible douleur, de réflexions sans nombre et quoique je vous en aie écrit longuement je reviens par occasion vous en parler encore. Hélas! Mon Dieu, faut-il que nous soyons si différents en croyance, vous et moi, et que celui qui est devenu mon frère se trouve en cela sur le point le plus opposé. C'est ce qui fait que nous voyons et sentons tout différemment au sujet de cette question sur Maurice. Vous, vous n'y voyez qu'une chose qui ne fait *rien* à sa vie et qui ne prend d'intérêt qu'en ce qui touche à Mme Sand, et votre soeur au contraire voit la vie, la mémoire l'âme de l'homme tout sur Maurice dans le temps et l'éternité, là dedans. Il est ainsi en regard de la foi. C'est sous ce rapport que j'envisage le fait religieux dans toute histoire d'homme, et que je ne puis voir celle de notre frère ou vous voulez la placer, où il semble qu'elle se place, d'après vos révélations. Je les prends pour *trop* véridiques, mais pas jusqu'au bout, pas jusqu'au jour ou venu ou redevenu Catholique prouvé par des actes d'irrécusable témoignage, votre ami sortit en entier de la ligne où vous l'aviez suivi et resaisit son titre de croyant, ce titre que j'estime pour lui avant et plus que toutes les gloires humaines et que cette malheu-

Letter No. 21

July 7 (1840)

For me, your last letter has been the cause of unspeakable grief, of endless reflection; and although I have written you at length, I must take occasion to speak further. Alas! *Mon Dieu*, must we be so at variance in belief, you and I, that he who had become my brother should in this respect be at the opposite pole? This causes us to see and feel in an absolutely contradictory fashion on this matter concerning Maurice.

You—you see only a thing which counted for *nothing* in his life, and which had no effect upon it save in what touches Mme. Sand. On the contrary, your sister sees there the life, the memory, the soul of a man, everything concerning Maurice, as a matter of time and eternity. It is the same in regard to faith. The religious element in the whole history of man shows itself to me in just this manner; I cannot visualize that of our brother in the way you wish to show it, or as it seems to be shown in your revelations. I consider them as only too truthful, but not with regard to the end, not with regard to the day when he became—or re-became—a Catholic, as proven by acts of irrefutable testimony. Then your friend entirely turned his back on the domain whither you had fol-

reuse notice lui effacerait. Je dis malheureuse parce que malgré le charme nous y perdrions trop et qu'il est triste de voir une âme tracée rien que dans ses erreurs, parlant dans mon sens toujours. Dans le vôtre c'est sa vie, sa nature d'être, qui se complète en pleine évidence dans les écrits qu'il vous a laissés. Dans votre sens, de cela j'en conviens, et tout ce que je vous demande, c'est de ne pas publier ces écrits là tout seuls, et sans ce que je vous déclare devant Dieu, de votre ami et qui fait qu'il ne les eût pas signés maintenant s'il eût pu prévoir les conclusions qu'on en tire, et d'ailleurs si ces écrits font sa vie de poète, sa vie d'idéal et d'adorateur de la forme des choses, sa vie de cœur et des passions, en un mot s'il est payen d'abord il est chrétien ensuite; un acte, rien qu'un acte de foi le change, et fait de son âme ce que fut la croix sur le Panthéon de Rome: à Dieu seul quoique élevée à tous les Dieux. Je le vois ainsi, mon frère Jules, par conviction et par justice, et comme je voudrais que cela s'établît je souffre beaucoup de vous savoir mon opposé, non pour le moment seulement mais pour plus tard, lorsque vous écrirez des choses qui resteront. Je serais contente, les larmes qui coulent s'arrêteraient devant ce cénotaphe que vous m'avez promis de lui sculpter, si j'y voyais le signe de foi, l'écu sans tache du chrétien qu'on ne lui a pas mis au premier monument. Si je

lowed him, and reconquered his title of Believer—that title which I prize for him before and above any human glory, but which this unhappy notice would deny him. I say “unhappy” because despite its charm we would lose too much by it, and it is sad to see a *soul* portrayed only in its errors—speaking always in my own sense. In yours, his life, his nature, is brought to completion in the writings he has left to you.

In your sense, I agree with you, and all I ask of you is not to publish these writings by themselves, without adding what I declare to you before God about your friend, who would not now have signed them could he have foreseen the conclusions drawn from them. And besides, if these writings make up his poetic life, his life of the heart and passions, his ideal life as the worshipper of the form of things—in a word, if he was first a pagan, he was afterward a Christian! An act, a single act of faith, has transformed him and made of his soul what the Cross made of the Pantheon at Rome: To the only God although built to all the gods.

I see him thus, my brother Jules, with assurance and with justice; and as I wish this fact to be established, I suffer greatly at finding you opposed to me—not for the moment merely but for all time, since you write things that will endure. I should be happy,

pouvais me reposer sur vous là-dessus je ne demanderais pas autre chose, pas même que vous présentiez mon hommage dont le but en partie serait rempli, et mieux, par vous, et je m'épargnerais ensuite un certain air de publicité que je n'aime pas [ou peu] du tout et auquel je m'expose par dévouement de coeur. C'est la dernière pensée où j'ai tourné en réfléchissant sur tout cela, dont j'ai l'esprit trop préoccupé peut-être, mais dans ma nature et ma vie d'isolement tout ce qui me touche prend racine. La façon dont tout ceci s'est présenté me pénètre, d'abord malgré ce que je vous ai dit que je savais si peu du fond d'où Mme Sand a tiré pour sa notice, jamais je n'aurais pensé que de là, pas plus que du *Centaure* et des fragmens qui l'entourent, on peut en conclure que Maurice était panthéiste pas plus qu'après avoir lu *Télémaque* je n'ai conclu que Fénelon fût grec. Voilà ce qui a fait ma douloureuse surprise, que j'ai appelée méprise de la part de Mme Sand, et à cause de laquelle je n'ai ni plus ni moins d'estime pour cette femme, que je n'en avais auparavant. Je ne la connais pas, je sais seulement que ses doctrines passent pour bien mauvaises, et que parlant d'elle et de Mme de Staël un jour avec Maurice et lui demandant s'il y avait quelque rapport entre ces deux femmes célèbres—oh, me dit-il, Mme de Staël est de bien meilleure compagnie, l'autre est la femme du

my tears would stop, if on the cenotaph you promised to carve for him, I could see the sign of the Faith, the spotless escutcheon of the Christian, which was not placed on the first monument. Could I be sure of you in this, I would demand nothing else—not even that you present my tribute, as its intent would be partially and much better fulfilled by you; and furthermore I would be spared a certain appearance of notoriety which I do not at all like, and to which I would expose myself in my devotion to him. This is the last thought I have weighed, in reflecting on all this; my spirit is perhaps too much occupied with it, but in my nature and my solitary life, everything that touches me takes root deeply.

The way in which all this is presented is painful to me; first, despite my telling you that I was ignorant on what source Mme. Sand drew for her article, I had never dreamed that from this, any more than from the *Centaure* and the fragments surrounding it, one would conclude that Maurice was a pantheist—any more than I would think Fénelon to be a Greek after reading the *Télémaque*. This is what caused my sorrowful surprise, this which I called a misunderstanding on the part of Mme. Sand, and because of it I have neither more nor less esteem for this woman than I had previously.

peuple. Je vous rends ces paroles qui me sont restées en impression comme tout ce qu'il me disait, impression qui ne fait que s'écarter par ce que cette même femme vient de faire d'aimable pour celui-là même qui l'a jugée pour moi. Je ne suis plus vis à vis d'elle sous aucune autre influence, loin de là, dans ce qu'elle a fait pour vous et la grâce de ses procédés, je voudrais pouvoir l'en remercier pleinement. Enfin Mme Sand est une de ces intelligences pour lesquelles j'éprouve une admiration douloureuse. La votre est bien différente et c'est ce qui me fait craindre de vous l'entendre exprimer trop haut. Une soeur peut faire une prière et je vous la fais; c'est de ne pas mêler votre nom dans cette mêlée de journaux, de demeurer par le silence avec nous. Ce serait le plus fraternel témoignage de frère que vous puissiez donner à votre soeur et qui le sera toujours. Adieu, nous avons beaucoup parlé de vous hier au soir avec mon père qui vous est infiniment attaché.

EUGÉNIE.

Je compte que tout ceci finira et sans faire aucun tort à personne; ce n'est que du moment si on n'y mêle pas l'importance de l'esprit de parti.

Monsieur Jules B. d'Aurevilly

*rue de Port-Mahon, Hotel de Neustrie, 9
Paris.*

Cachet: Juillet 11, 1840.

I do not know her; I know only that her doctrines are supposed to be very wicked. Speaking one day with Maurice of her and of Mme. de Staël, and asking him whether these two famous women had anything in common: "Oh," said he, "Mme. de Staël is much more of a gentlewoman; the other is a woman of the people!" I present you these words, which like all he said to me made a deep impression—an impression which is not relieved by the kindness this woman has just done him who judged her for me. As to her, I am under no other influence; far from it, I should like to be able to thank her fully for what she has done for us, and for the delicacy of her behavior. Mme. Sand is one of those great minds for whom I feel a sorrowful admiration. Your affection is far different; and that is why I fear to hear you express it too publicly.

A sister may be permitted one prayer, and I make mine to you: Do not let your name enter this journalistic tumult, but remain with us, in silence. This will be the most fraternal testimony you, as a brother, could evince to your sister, who will ever remain a sister to you. Adieu. Last evening we spoke much of you with my father, who is infinitely attached to you.

EUGÉNIE.

I hope that all this will come to an end without

THE LETTERS

causing damage to anyone; it is only momentary, unless the feeling of party strife is injected into it.

M. Jules B. d'Aurevilly,

Rue de Port Mahon, Hotel de Neustrie, 9, Paris.

Postmarked: July 11, 1840.

PART THREE

THE CENTAUR



THE CENTAUR

"He imagines the last of the Centaurs . . . recounting in melancholy age the pleasures of his youth to a curious mortal. . . . Nothing is so powerful as this dream of some pages; nothing is more perfect and classical in its execution."

—SAINTE-BEUVE.

I was brought into life in the caves of yonder mountains. Like the river in this valley, whose first drops come from a rock weeping in a profound grotto, the first moment of my life fell upon the shadows of a hidden sojourn, without disturbing its silence.

When our mothers feel deliverance at hand, they seek the shelter of distant caverns; and there, in the most savage depths, in the deepest shadow, they bring forth an offspring silent as themselves, without a cry. Their milk, by its virtues, enables us to surmount without fatigue or struggle all the first troubles of life; however, we leave our grottoes much later than do you your cradles. This, because among us it is said that one must shelter and protect the first portion of life, as being a time occupied with the gods.

My growth was almost entirely passed in those shad-

ows where I was born. So deep within the womb of the mountain was my cavern that I had ignored its very mouth had not the winds, sometime playing about the entrance, wafted their coolness and vague longings inside. Sometimes, too, my mother returned exhaling the perfume of the valleys or dripping from the waves she loved to frequent. Although in these home-comings she never told me of the valleys or the streams, their subtle scent of itself disturbed my spirit, and I prowled uneasily in my shadows. What are these externals, I would ask myself, whither my mother departs? Who so puissant reigns there that he can so frequently summon her forth? And what divers experiences can there be, that she should return each day in different vein? Now my mother would come back animated by vivid joy; at other times, sad and dragging herself along as though wounded. The happiness which inspired her was shown afar in certain movements, and shone in her looks. I felt its influence through my whole being; but her despondencies had more power over me, and carried me much farther in these ponderings where my spirit wandered.

At these times my own strength rendered me uneasy; here I recognized a power which could not remain solitary; it seized upon me, led me to shake my arms, to quicken my gallop in the spacious shadows of

the cavern; I sought to discover, in the blows I aimed at emptiness, in the fleetness of my pace, whither my arms were stretched, whither my feet were bound! Since then, I have enlaced the throats of centaurs in my arms, and the bodies of heroes, and the trunks of oaks; my hands have caught at rocks, waters, plants innumerable, and the most subtle impressions of the atmosphere, for in the blind calm nights I lift them to surprise the zephyrs and gain auguries to guide my way. As to my feet—see, O Melampus, how they are worn! Yet, frozen as I am in these cold bonds of age, I live again in these days upon the sunlit crests those races of my youth in the cavern, brandishing my arms and giving vent to what remains of my vital forces.

These troubled days alternated with long absences of any inquiet movement. After this, I was conscious of nothing in my whole being but the feeling of growth, of the life increasing in my body. Yielding no more to impulse, retired in an absolute repose, I enjoyed without interruption the goodness of the gods which now quickened within me. Peace and shadow presided over the secret charm of the realization of life. Shadows, dwelling in the caverns of these mountains, it is to your silent care that I owe the furtive education which nourished me so greatly; under your protection I tasted a life wholly pure, as it came to

me from the breasts of the gods! When I passed from your haven into the full light of day, I trembled and welcomed it not; for it carried me violently away, intoxicated me like a sad liqueur suddenly poured into my heart; and I found that my Being, until then so firm and simple, was shaken, losing much of itself, as though dissipated upon the winds.

O Melampus, seeking to learn the life of centaurs, what will of the gods led you to me, the oldest and saddest of them all? It is now long since I tasted their life; no more do I leave the crest of this mountain, where age confines me. The barbs of my arrows now serve only to uproot stubborn herbs; the quiet lakes still know me, but the rivers have forgotten me. I will tell you of my youth; but these recollections, borne of a weary memory, are dragged forth like drops of a niggardly libation falling from the lip of a broken urn.

I have more easily told of the early years, since they were calm and perfect; the pure and simple life about me is remembered and told without difficulty. Thus, O Melampus, a god besought to recount his life, would comply in two words!

The experiences of my youth were rapid, filled with motion. I lived in movement, knowing no bounds to my feet. In the pride of my full strength, I wandered

everywhere in these deserts. One day, following a valley whither centaurs seldom went, I caught sight of a man following the farther bank of the river; he was the first whom I had ever seen, and I was seized with contempt for him. At most, I told myself, he is but the half of me! How short his step, how ungainly his walk! His eyes seem to turn sadly toward heaven; doubtless he is a centaur struck down by the gods and reduced to drag himself thus along!

Many of my days were spent in the bed of rivers. Half of my form, hidden beneath the waters, struggled to surmount them, while the other half remained tranquil, my idle arms upheld above the flood. Thus would I forget myself among the waves, yielding to the urge of the current; it would carry me afar, leading its savage guest past all the beauties of the river-edge. How many times, surprised by night, have I followed the current beneath the overspread shadows, carrying into the uttermost depths of the valleys the nocturnal influence of the gods!

So was my impetuous life tempered, until there remained only a light consciousness of existence, emanating equally from my entire being, like the gentle light of the night-coursing goddess in the waters where I swam. My old age craves these rivers, Melampus! Peaceful and monotonous, for the most part, they fol-

lowed their destiny with more poise than that of centaurs, with more kindly wisdom than that of men. When I left their bosom, I was pursued by their gifts which remained entire days with me, only vanishing slowly, like all perfumes.

A blind and savage inconsistency ruled my steps. In the midst of the most violent gallop my pace would suddenly be broken as though an abyss had appeared under my feet, or a god had shown himself standing before me. These abrupt halts gave me a sense of life, deeply affected by my environment. Sometimes I would cut branches in the forests, lifting them above my head as I raced; the speed of my course held the leaves immobile, so that they gave only a slight trembling—but at the least slackening, the breeze set all the branches in agitation, wakening in them again the echoes of its murmurs. Thus would life tremble all through my breast, with the sudden halt of my impetuous careerings through these valleys. I could feel it run through me, boiling, blazing with flames kindled in free space. My heaving flanks struggled against its flood, pressing them inwardly, and tasting in these tempests the voluptuousness known only to the sea-shores—that of restraining but not losing an angry tide of life cresting at the rise.

Now, head lowered to the sweet freshness of the

wind, I would gaze at the mountain peaks, suddenly become distant; at the riverside trees and the waters of the flood—the latter borne along by a dragging current, the former rooted in the breast of the earth, mobile only in their branches that sighed in the light breaths of air. “I alone have free motion,” I told myself, “and can transport at pleasure my life from one end of these valleys to the other. I am more happy than the torrents that fall from the mountains, never to return. My rolling hoof-beat is more beautiful than the sighs of the forest and the splashing of the waves; it marks the reverberant passing of the centaur, he who guides himself!” Thus, while my heaving flanks still knew the drunkenness of the race, my brain felt the pride of it, and turning my head, I would pause a space to regard my smoking croup.

Youth is like verdant forests tortured by the winds; on all sides it is agitated by the rich gifts of life, and always some deep murmur sounds through its foliage. Living with the abandon of rivers, breathing in Cybele incessantly, now in the depths of valleys, now at the crest of mountains, I leaped everywhere like a blind, unchained life-force. But when night, filled with the peace of the gods, found me on the mountain-slopes, she led me to the entrance of the caverns and there appeased me, as she appeases the waves of the

sea, leaving in me only those light undulations which held slumber aside yet did not affect my repose.

Lying on the threshold of my retreat, flanks hidden in the grotto, head uncovered to the sky, I followed the spectacle of the shadows. Then the outward life which had filtered into me all day went out of me drop by drop, returning to the peaceful bosom of Cybele, as after a rain the droplets of water attached to the leaves slowly fall and join their brethren. They say that the sea-gods leave their deep palaces during the night and, seated on promontories, look out upon their waves. So I watched, having at my feet an expanse of life not unlike the drowsy sea. Returned to my distinct and full existence, it seemed to me that I had just been born, and that the profound waters which had conceived me in their bosom had just left me on the mountain-height, like a dolphin forgotten on the shoals by the waves of Amphitrite.

My gaze roved freely about, even to the most distant points. Like ever-humid riverbanks, the western mountains retained a sheen of light not yet wiped away by darkness; in the pale obscurity some peaks yet stood up clear-cut, naked. And there I sometimes saw the god Pan descend, always alone; sometimes the chorus of secret divinities; or sometimes a nymph of the mountains would pass, drunken with the night.

And sometimes the eagles of Mount Olympus would sweep across the arc of heaven and vanish amid the distant stars or among the whispering trees. The spirit of the gods, stirring in them, would suddenly trouble the peace of these old oaks.

You, O Melampus, pursue wisdom, the science of the will of the gods, and you wander among all peoples like a mortal misled by destiny. Somewhere here there is a stone which, upon being touched, gives off a sound like the breaking strings of an instrument; men say that Apollo, pursuing the hunt in these solitudes, laid his lyre upon this stone, and left the sound of music. O Melampus! Wandering gods have laid their lyres upon the stones; but none, not one, has forgotten it there! While I grew up in the caverns, I sometimes thought to surprise the sleeping Cybele in dream, that the mother of the gods, betrayed by her slumbers, might part with some of her secrets; but I have caught only murmurs dissolved upon the breath of night, and inarticulate words like the purling of streams.

“O Macareus!” said to me one day the great Chiron, whom I followed in his age, “we are both centaurs of the mountains; but how different are our habits! As you see, all my daily care consists in gathering herbs; while you are like those mortals who have gath-

ered, on the waters or in the forests, some fragments of the reed-pipes broken by the god Pan, and who have held these to their lips. Henceforth these mortals, inspired by the wreckage of the god with a wild spirit or perhaps with some secret madness, wander in the deserts, plunge into the forests, follow the streams, penetrate the mountains, uneasy and borne on by an unknown force. The mares of farthest Scythia, loved by the winds, are not more fierce than you, nor more sad with evening, when Aquilon has departed. O Macareus, do you seek the gods, and whence are sprung men, animals, all the principles of the universal flame? But ancient Ocean, father of all things, keeps these secrets to himself; and the nymphs who surround him maintain a perpetual chorus of song before him, to drown whatever might escape his lips in the depths of slumber. The mortals whose virtues have appealed to the gods, have received from their hands lyres wherewith to charm all peoples, or new seeds wherewith to enrich them—but no word from their inexorable lips!

“In my youth, Apollo taught me a liking for herbs, showing me how to draw kindly essences from their veins. Since then, I have faithfully remained in the high abode of these mountains, restless yet without pause seeking out herbs and giving to men the good

things I discover. Can you see from here the bald crest of Mount Oeta? Alcides despoiled it to build his funeral pyre. O Macareus! The demigods, children of the gods, stretch out the spoil of lions upon their pyres and are consumed at the crests of the mountains! The poisons of earth infect the blood received from immortals!

“And we centaurs, begotten by an audacious mortal in the heart of a cloud like a goddess—what do we expect from the aid of Jupiter, whose bolt smote down the author of our race? The vulture of the gods eternally tears at the entrails of the workman who formed the first man. Men and centaurs, Macareus, alike know that their blood sprang from thieves of immortal privileges; and perhaps everything outside their own natures is but a pilfering, a light *débris* of character borne afar, like flying seeds, by the almighty breath of destiny. They say that Egeus, father of Theseus, concealed under a seaside rock the tokens and marks by which his son might some day learn his birth. The jealous gods have concealed the proofs of the descent of all things—but at the edge of what ocean lies the stone that covers them, O Macareus?”

Such was the wisdom of the great Chiron. Brought low in old age, the centaur nourished in his spirit all the highest discourse. His yet hardy bust scarce was

THE CENTAUR

bowed, rising above his flanks with only a light drooping, as an oak saddened by the winds; and the flight of years had scarce affected the swiftness of his pace. One would have said that he retained some fragments of the immortality formerly received from Apollo, which he had given back to that god.

As for me, O Melampus, I decline in old age, calm as the setting stars. I still have enough boldness to reach the crests of the peaks and to pause there, it may be to watch the savage and restless clouds, it may be to see the rainy Hyades come from the horizon, or the Pleiades, or great Orion; but I know that I am weakened and rapidly passing like snow floating on the water, and that soon I will mingle with the rivers which flow into the vast bosom of the earth.

THE END

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Guerin, Maurice de
AUTHOR

From centaur to cross
TITLE

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